THE FRONT ROW

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TO

MARY NEWCOMB

who came to me from behind the footlights
and stilled forever my desire to sit in

The Front Row

these reminiscences are affectionately dedicated

THE FRONT ROW

I suppose this book should date from my first experience in the theatre, and that began with my being taken by my Mother and Father took me to see Joseph Jefferson in "Rip van Winkle" at the Globe Theatre in Boston. I don't know just how old I was - nine or ten perhaps - but I do remember that the play made a very deep impression on my mind, and I also remember that we had seats in the front row. I had asked my Mother to try to get seats there because I wanted to see and hear all that was going on, and a little shaver like me could not do that if seated a bit far back - even in the "fourth row on the aisle", which was where all conservative old Bostonians liked to sit if possible. So, as this was my party,- in the front row we sat.

We got to the theatre pretty early - I remember that too - and there was a little wait before the curtain went up on the scene in the little mountain village in the Catskills, where the first act of the play was laid. While we waited for that curtain to rise I looked around the theatre to see who was there, and to my great enjoyment, I recognized a great many of my playmates; Charlie Jackson - I wonder if he remembers it; Guy Scull - a well known War correspondent in after years - and quite a few others whose names I have now forgotten. I had gone to the theatre with my Mother, but just before the play began, my Father, who had slipped away from his office (it was a matinee performance) joined us, and I, who had been worrying lest he should be unable to come, was quite happy; for nothing was perfect to me, in those days, unless he was a part of it. He sat next to me, and with my hand in his, I watched the performance of the play which was so identified with the great actor, and enjoyed every minute of it; though, to be perfectly frank, I think I enjoyed being with my Father most of all. I saw Joseph Jefferson in "Rip van Winkle" many times in after years, when I was better able to appreciate his wonderful portrayal of the loveable old reprobate who slept for so long; but never did I get more real enjoyment out of it than on that winter afternoon in Boston ~~almost~~ more than sixty years ago.

One of the oldest landmarks in Boston that has disappeared in recent years was the old Boston Museum, which stood on Tremont Street just below the historic King's Chapel. I don't know when the first preformance was given in the old theatre, but I do know that it flourished long before my time, in the days when William Warren and Mrs. Vincent headed the casts. Speaking of the Boston Museum in its early days, Henry Austin Clapp, in his "Reminiscences of a Dramatic Critic", says:-

"At the outset, as every Bostonian knows, the establishment was conducted on the plan of Barnum's of New York. The word 'theatre' was not visible on any of its bills, programmes or advertisements. It was a museum and justified its title by an edifying exhibit of stuffed animals, bones, mummies, minerals, wax figures, and other curios; making, through these 'branches of learning' and its long-continued obeisance to Puritan tradition - after that tradition had ceased from the Municipal Orinances - by closing its doors on Saturday nights, and eloquent appeal to the patronage of sober persons affected with scruples against the godless theatre. The appeal was as successful as it was shrewd. To this day (1902) I doubt not, there are citizens of Boston who patronise no other place of theatrical amusement than its Museum, though the stuffed beasts and the observance of the even of the Lord's Day are things of the past. But, howver disguised or preferred by the children of the Puritans, 'The Museum' was a theatre if ever there was one. Those who can recall its earliest days will find clinging to their memories swarms of names, generally well mixed up as to dates and sequences: Mr Tom Comer, leader of the orchestra, accomplished musician and genial gentleman; W.H.Smith, an old time actor and manager of stately style; Mrs Thoman, a charming performer of light comedy: Mr Finn, droll son of a droller father; the graceful and vivid Mr Keach; Mr J.Davies, who was a very 'heavy' villain on the stage, but off it lightly wielded the barber's razor; the blazing Mrs Barrett, whose life went out in darkness; J.A.Smith, who did stage fops, always with the same drawl and rising inflection, and an actor by night was a tailor by day, except on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, when he was an

actor: Miss Kate Reignolds, a very brilliant player, who, as Mrs Erving Winslow, has now the highest reputation as a reader; the drily effective Mr Hardenbergh; Mr. Charles Barron, a careful and versatile leading man; Miss Annie Clarke who made herself an accomplished actress, despite the handicaps of a harsh voice and native stiffness of bearing; Mrs Vincent, the perennial, the great-hearted, who for years } was never mentioned except in close connection with the adjectives 'dear' and 'old'; and finally, William Warren the comedian."

Most of these artists, though familiar to me because their names were often mentioned by my Father, who was very fond of the theatre, I never saw; but I do remember well Miss Annie Clarke and Mr Barron and the leading actors and actresses of the "gay nineties" - Miss Mirian O'Leary, Mr John Mason, Miss Viola Allen, and many others who in after years rose to stardom on Broadway. No one has paid a better tribute to the old days of the Boston Museum than that well known actor, the late Edward Hugh Sothern, who joined the Boston Museum company for a short time, very early in his career. He says, in his autobiography - "The Melancholy Tale of 'Me'"-

" In 1879, when I joined the Museum company, that temple of the drama still had a following of its own. Each member of the organization had, from long association and distinguished service, become something of an institution. Citizens had been brought up from childhood to love and revere them. Especially was this the case with Mr William Warren and Mrs Vincent, whose service in this one theatre covered a period of nearly fifty years. The actual merit of the performance at the Boston Museum was perhaps greater than that of any other stock company in the country. Mr Warren has been declared the superior of his cousin, Joseph Jefferson. And yet, outside the city of Boston - save in a few New England towns - neither he nor Mrs Vincent were known at all. To them, however, a modest but established home and the perpetual enjoyment of a circle of intimate and admiring friends compensated for a wider fame. Many of a greater notoriety, on looking back, would gladly have changed places with them; to have been able to contemplate in retrospect so many years of peaceful labour and to have been so truly honoured and so well beloved. To such an

extent did this sentiment prevail in the case of Mrs Vincent that the Vincent Hospital founded in her name under the auspices of Trinity Church, is in these days sometimes inadvertently called 'Saint Vincent's Hospital'".

I quote these two excerpts in order to show the feeling which was prevalent in Boston at the time when I began to go to the theatre, and also to show the merits of the company of players who presented, at that theatre, the best plays of the modern playrights, as well as some of the classics. In my early days, the "Star" system had not come into common practice, though often there were visiting "stars" who travelled from city to city, appearing at those theatres which maintained a first-class stock company which could be utilized for their support. But, in the nineties, the plays at the Boston Museum were, for the most part, presented by the stock company which was engaged throughout the season and which appeared in such plays as Pinero's "Sweet Lavender", Bronson Howard's "Shenandoah", etc.etc. In fact, one of my earliest vivid recollections of the theatre is that of a performance of the latter play at the Boston Museum.

It is all very clear in my mind. My Mother was in New York, and the "Old Man" and I were left alone. He came home from the office rather early one night and we had dinner together, and then he said:- "Sonny, there's a new play in town - at the Museum - called 'Shenandoah'. It's about the War and I thought you would like to see it with me, and so I've got a couple of seats. Would you like to go ?"

Of course I was delighted, and we went off together like a couple of kids on a lark - he to have his memories of the Civil War revived, I to see an exciting play. It was a good play from a spectacular point of view and it was well acted. Viola Allen, who in after years made a great name for herself in Hall Caine's plays, played the Southern heroine, who was of course in love with the Northern hero played by John Mason; and such well known players as Maurice Barrymore (the father of Ethel and Lionel and Jack) and Tom Thorne and Annie Clarke, were in the leading parts. The climax comes in the second act, when the Northern troops are in full retreat before

E. H. Sothern
1894

the Rebel onslaught, led by the villain of the piece and are only saved from complete annihilation by the timely arrival of General Sheridan, to whom the news of the attack has been brought by the heroine. Of course, a great many liberties were taken with history, and I fancy that the official War Records would tell a somewhat different story of that terrific battle in Virginia. But to me it was wonderful, and there must have been a good deal in the play that was true to life; for I remember that my Father was a good deal affected by it. He and I went to the theatre quite often in those days, but he was a very busy man, and frequently used to come home too tired to go to a theatre at night,- so I sometimes went to a matinee by myself, or in the evening with my Mother or the families of some of my friends.

One day - it must have been about two years after the evening which I have described above - Father took me on a visit to New York. He had to go on business which kept him occupied much of the day, but we went to the theatre every night and I spent most of my spare time at the Eden Musée, where I amused myself looking at the wax-works and trying to play checkers with the famous automaton who defeated all comers. I insisted that Father should come there with me one afternoon, as I was convinced that he could avenge my defeats,- but, alas, that project was a failure. But to go back to the theatre. I remember that we saw two plays - one was "Old Heads and Young Hearts", played by the Lyceum Stock Company, which, at that time, included Herbert Kelsey, Georgia Cayvan, Effie Shannon and Cyril Scott - names to conjure with in the theatre in those days - and the other play was "Lord Chumley", a comedy written by Henry de Mille and David Belasco, in which Edward Sothern was making his first appearance as a star, under the management of Daniel Frohman. I have that programme before me now. What names it contains! Men and women who in after years were famous in the annals of the stage,- David Belasco, at that time Manager of the Lyceum Theatre, in after years perhaps the greatest producer America has ever seen, author and co-autho of countless successful plays; Tully Marshall, who even to-day one sees on the screen, as one also does another member of that cast - Morton Selton; Rowland Buxton, who later played "Colonel Sapt" in "The Prisoner of Zenda". All three of these men were in

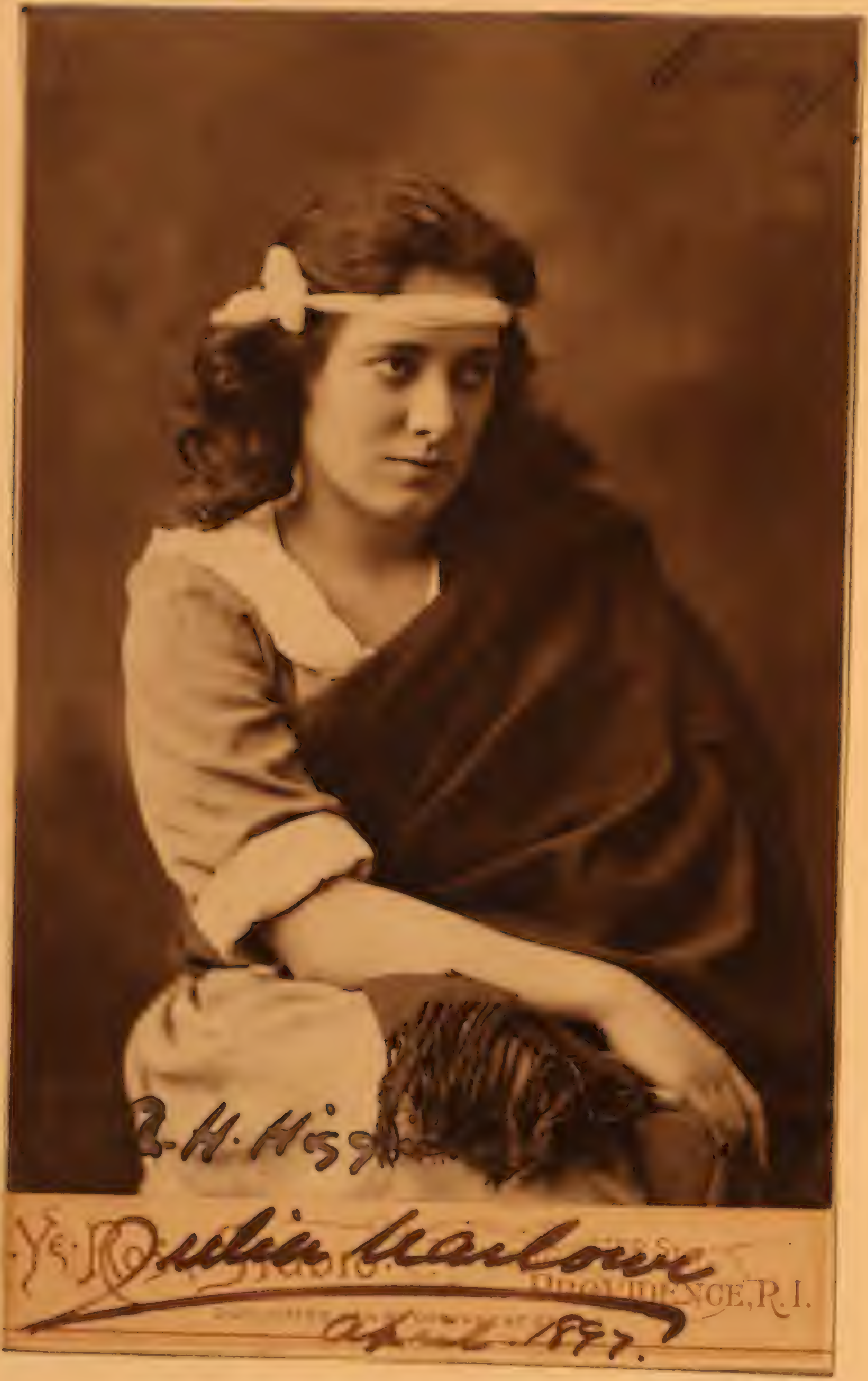
To my friend –
E. H. Sothern
1897 –

Very truly
E. H. Sothern
1897

Anthony Hope

"ANTHONY HOPE"

Anthony Hope
author of
"The Prisoner of Zenda"



R. H. Higg

Julia Marlowe

April 1897.

as "Mary"

in

"For Bonnie Prince Charlie"

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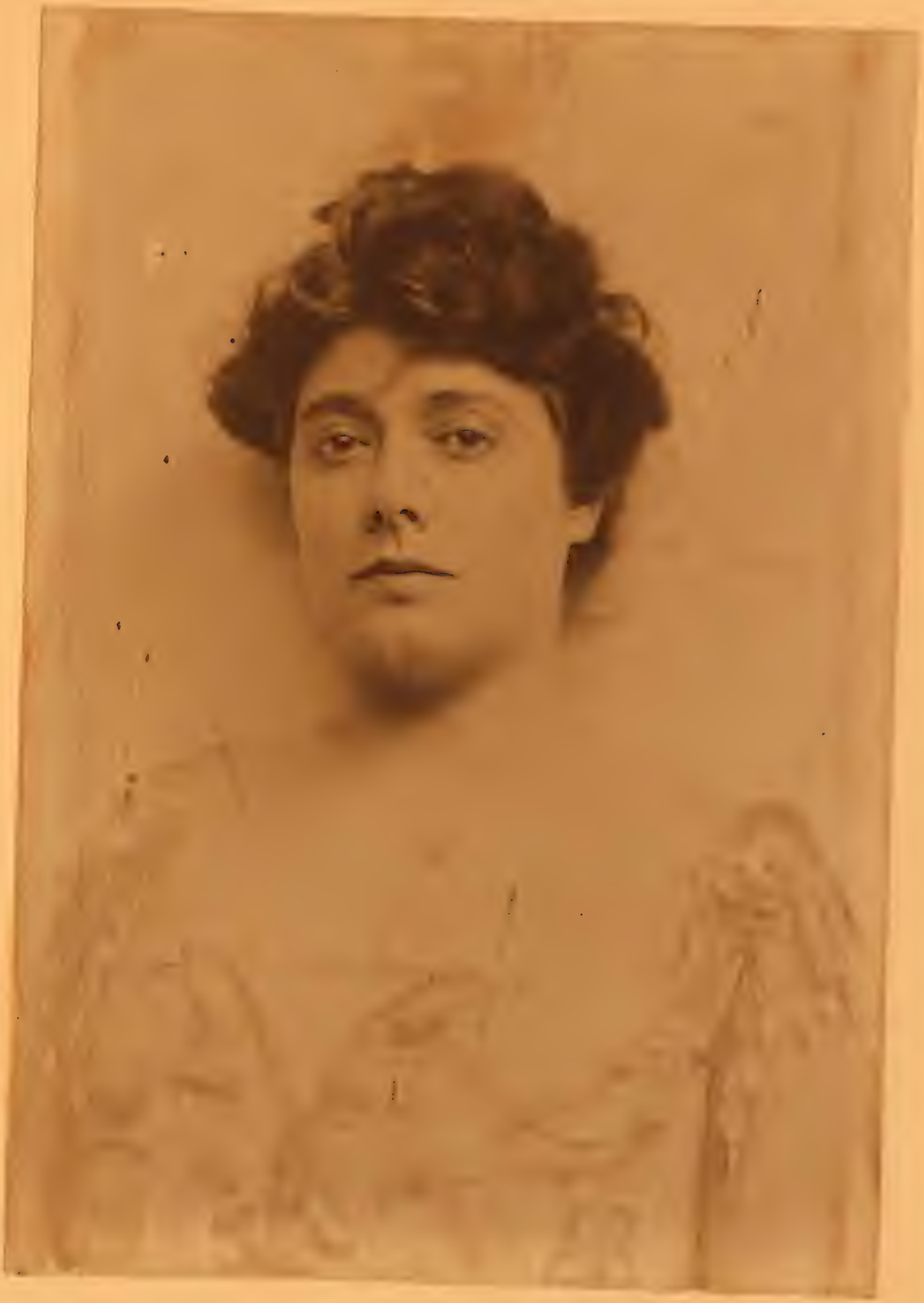
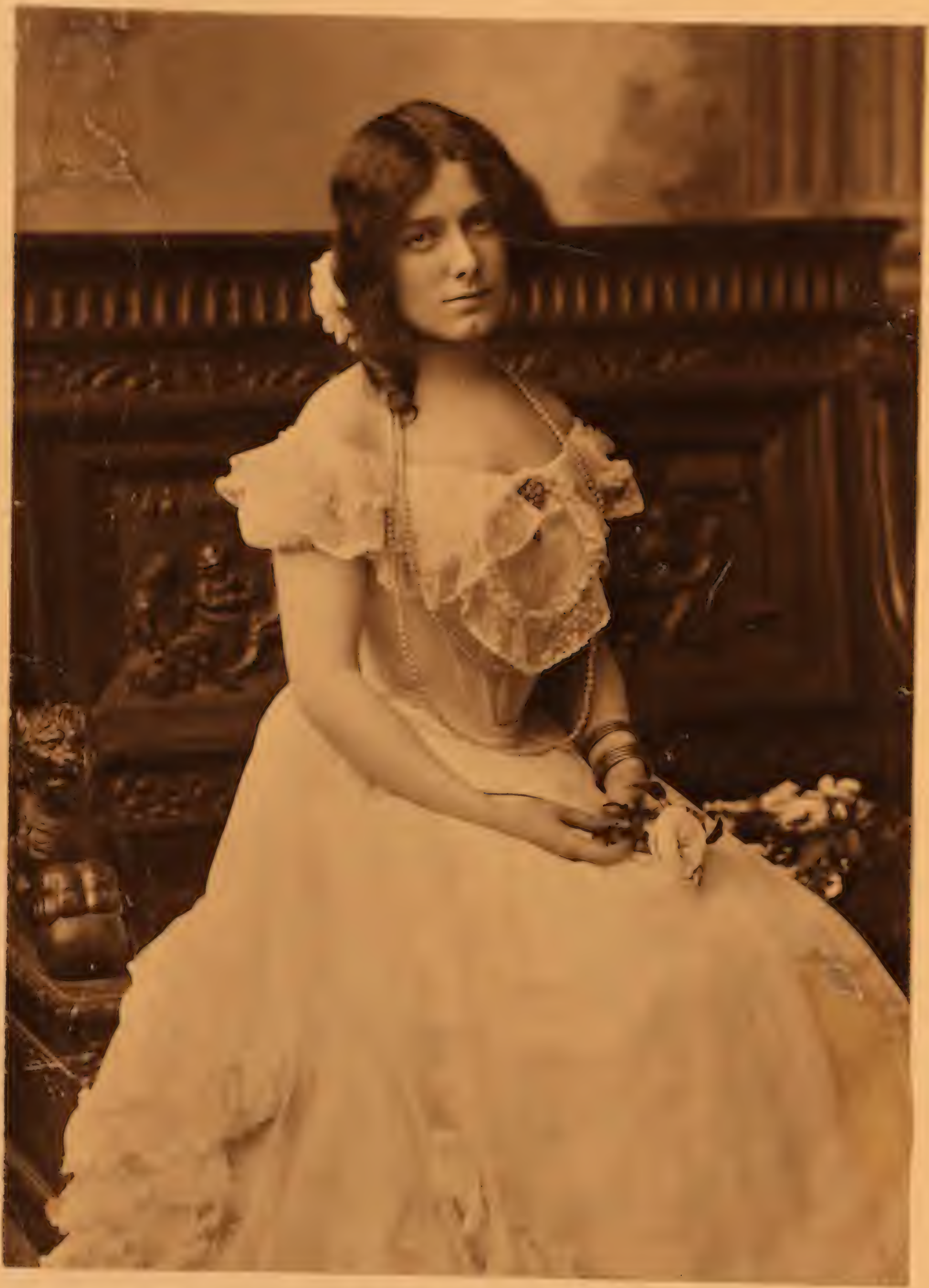
Sothern's company for many years; and among the women, Virginia Harned - who perhaps made her greatest success as "Trilby" in the dramatization of George du Maurier's novel of that name - and last of all, Sothern himself, perhaps the most successful star on the American stage for twenty years. Certainly in comedy and romantic drama Sothern had no equal, and no one who ever saw his charaterisation of "Rudolf Rassendyll" in "The Prisoner of Zenda", or "Francois Villon" in "If I were King" could ever forget them. I think I saw Sothern in nearly everything he played - failures as well as successes - and there were failures, as there always must be, even for the most successful star. But he was one of the few actors among those whom I admired whom I never came to know well. He was very chary of his friendships outside the theatre. I was quite mad about his performance in "The Prisoner of Zenda" - I believe I saw the play twenty-seven times - and I have to-day a copy of the entire play, a correct one at that, written purely from memory. It must have been nearly twenty years later after he and Julia Marlowe were married, that I came to know him even slightly; but I have always felt that he was one of the greatest actors that America has produced.

Julia Marlowe, who must of course always be rated among the great American actresses, was another subject of my youthful enthusiasm. It so happened that, in her younger days, she was intimately acquainted with some friends of my Mother's and I think it was at a reception given to her by Mrs Charles Fairchild, that we first made her acquaintance. I have called Miss Marlowe an American actress, but of course she was born in Cumberland - not far from the country which heard the sound of John Peel's horn. Of her early career I know very little; but in 1897 she came to Boston in a play called "For Bonnie Prince Charlie" - a translation by J.I.C.Clark of Francois Coppet's "Les Jacobites" - which interested me greatly. Miss Marlowe was charming to me, and at that time began an acquaintance - I wish I might call it a friendship - which lasted for many years until she retired from the stage. She used often to come to my Father's house in Boston and I saw her there, as well as in more theatrical surroundings. Miss Marlowe's portrayals of Shakespeare's heroines were always beautifully conceived and interesting; though I confess that to me such romantic heroines



Miss Marlowe
1898



Miss Marlowe
as
"Barbara Frietchie"

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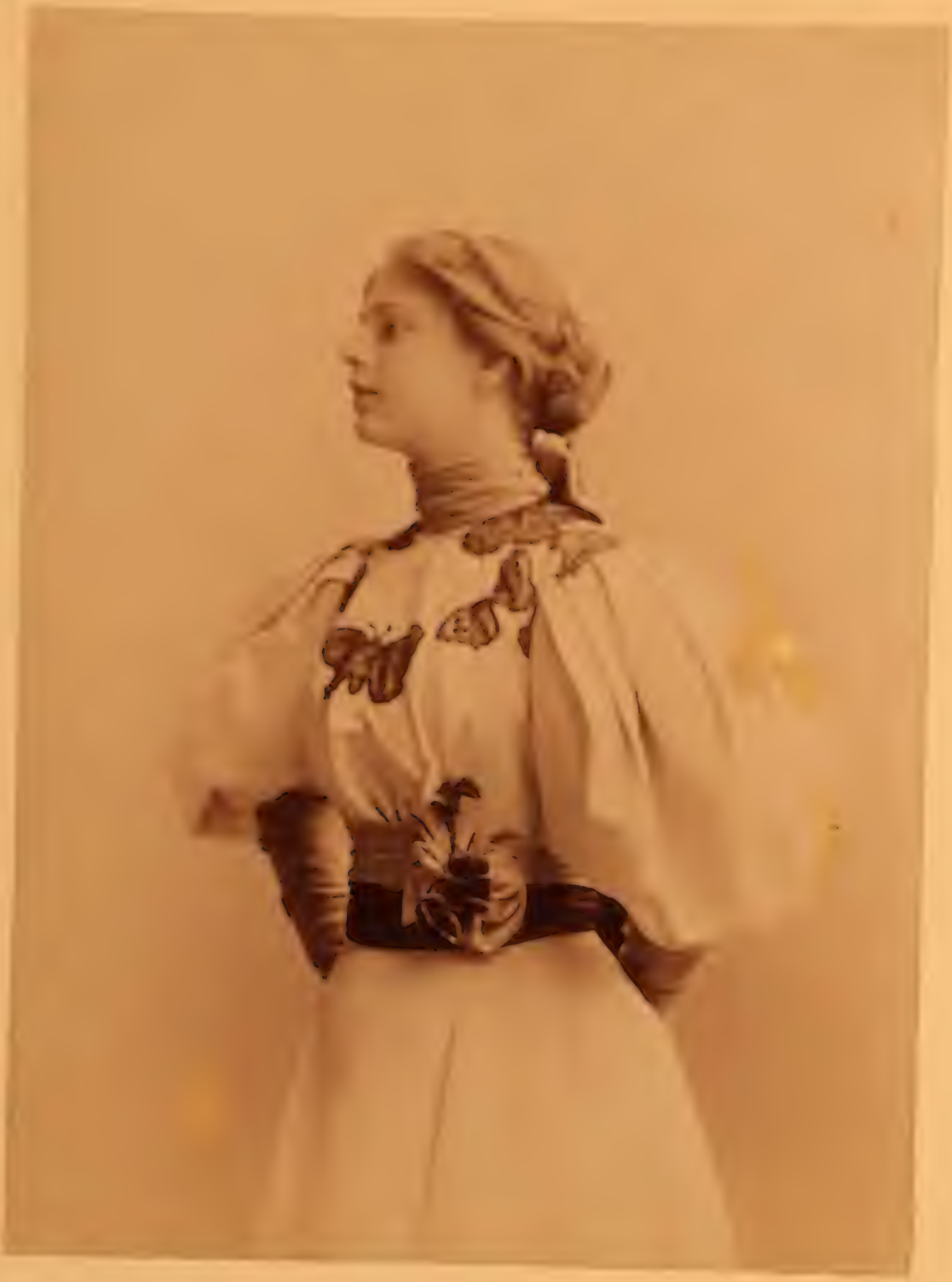
as "Mary Tudor" in "When Knighthood Was in Flower", and "Barbara Fristche" in Clyde Fitch's drama of the Civil War, were more to my taste. The marriage of Marlowe and Sothern in after years brought to the theatre a combination which was worthy of even Shakespeare's best plays. Perhaps they were both a little too old to give the most convincing rendering of "Romeo and Juliet", though I have never seen a lovelier "Juliet" than Marlowe in her early days. I have always felt that "The Merchant of Venice" gave them their best chance together in serious drama, and "The Taming of the Shrew" in what one might almost term farce comedy. At the outbreak of the first World War, after t their partial retirement from the stage, they were, I think, living in England, and it was from there that they set forth upon their mission to the Forces at the Front, to whom they gave of their best, under the most trying and dangerous conditions. Sothern died a few years ago and Miss Marlowe no longer lives in that lovely village in the Cotswolds, which was for so long the home of another American actress, Mary Anderson Navarro. I have not seen her for years, but I hope that some day our paths may cross again.

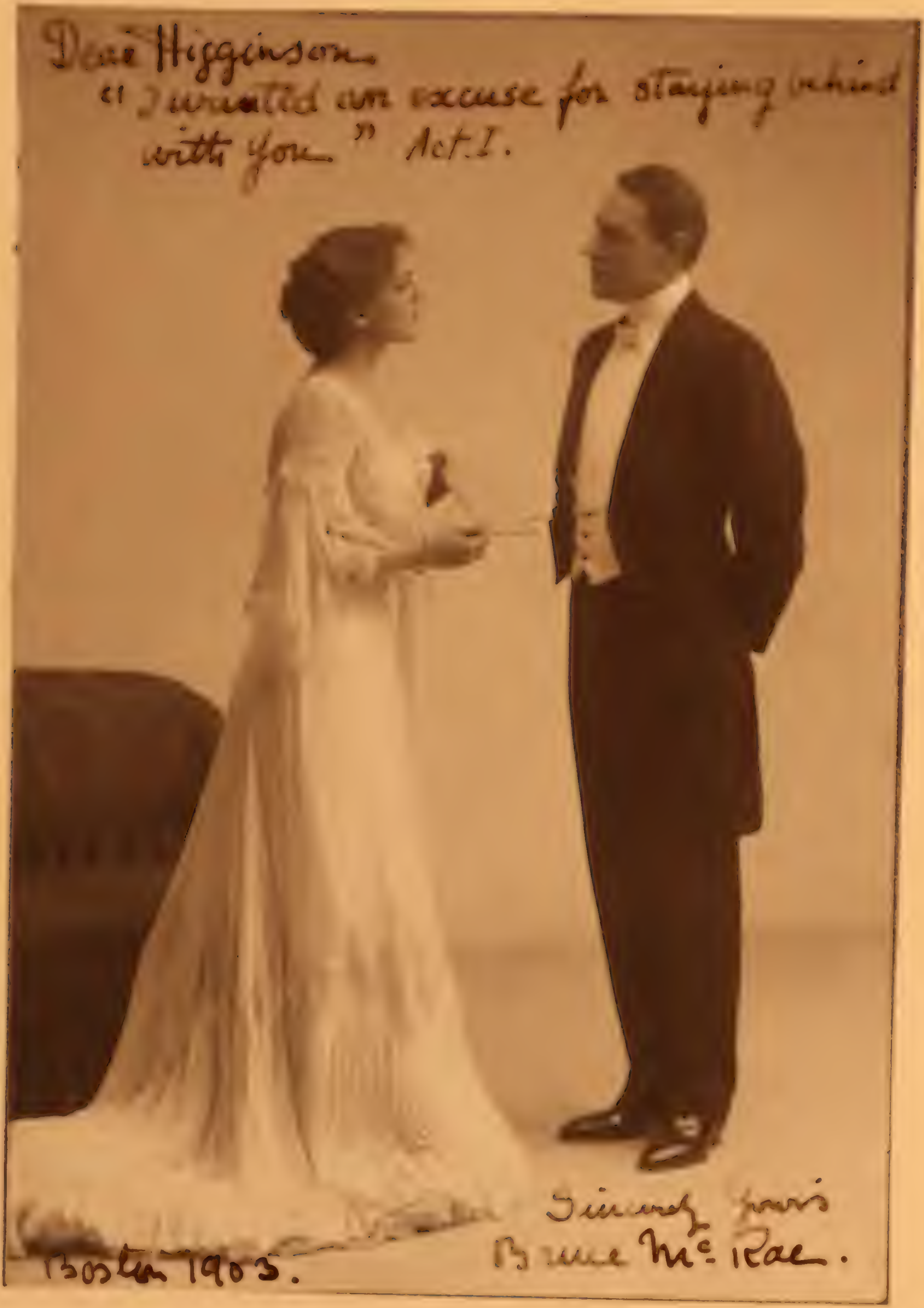
One of Miss Marlowe's most successful plays, which I have mentioned - "When Knighthood Was in Flower" - brought to me memories of early Museum days; for there was Miss Annie Clarke playing "Catherine of Aragon", perhaps the most disagreeable of the wives of Bluff King Hal, - who, by the way, was played by Charles Harbury whom I came to know well in after years. Miss Marlowe's leading man in that play was Bruce McRae, of whom it was said that he had no enemies, and I can well believe it, for a more kindly thoughtful man I have never known. Bruce and I took to each other at once. He was an outdoor man and, though he came of theatrical stock, not himself an actor by disposition. He had spent his early years ranching in Australia and was a fine horseman, very different from some of my theatrical friends who wished themselves thought masters of an art which needed very different qualities from the portrayal of stage characters. He used to spend his Sundays at Lincoln and we had many a good ride together; particularly when he was playing with Ethel Barrymore in "Cousin Kate".



Ethel Barrymore
in
"The Bauble Shop"
1894

What a charming play that was! And how delightfully produced, the [illegible]

What a charming play that was! And how delightfully [illegible] portrayed the attractive Irish artist with a bit of a brogue who meets "Cousin Kate" in the empty house and tells her the story of "The Three Bears"! I shall never forget his closing words to Ethel at the end of the play, after all the troubles which have beset the lovers are over - "An' now will ye marry me ?" Or her rejoinder - "Sure an' I will." I can almost hear it now! Ethel had very good plays in those days when she and Bruce were together - "Lady Frederick"; "Cousin Kate"; "A Country Mouse"; His Excellency The Governor"; and a revival of her first great success, "Captain Jinks". I don't think she ever appeared to greater advantage. When one stops to consider that Ethel Barrymore's theatrical career covers a period of ~~almost~~ more than half a century, during which time she has delighted American audiences from coast to coast, it seems to me that she holds a place that is quite unique in the annals of the American stage. So far as I know, I saw her first performance - certainly one of her first appearances on the professional stage. I was a Freshman in College, and I had gone one night to the Hollis Street Theatre in Boston to see John Drew in a play by Henry Arthur Jones called "The Bauble Shop", in which he and Maude Adams were delighting Boston audiences. John was excellent in the leading part - so was Miss Adams - but my interest was focussed on a tall slight girl of striking beauty who played the part of "Lady Kate Fennel". I looked on the programme and saw the name, Miss Ethel Barrymore. I knew little of stage relationships in those days, and it was not until the next day, when the Boston Transcript announced the fact, that I was aware that my "tall slight girl" was the daughter of Maurice Barrymore and Georgie Drew (Barrymore) and therefore John Drew's niece. But that did not do me any good. I had not the honour at that time of knowing "Uncle Jack" and I was in a quandary as to how I was going to meet Miss Barrymore. I think that about half the Harvard undergraduates that I knew were "wildly smitten" and everyone wanted to meet her. "The Bauble Shop" played in Boston for three weeks, and it was not until the final week that I was formally introduced. I cannot remember just how it came about, but I can remember that I was thrilled when she consented to come to a Symphony Concert with me on her final Friday afternoon. She was very fond of good



Dear Higginson
"I wanted an excuse for staying behind with you." Act I.

Sincerely yours
Bruce McRae.

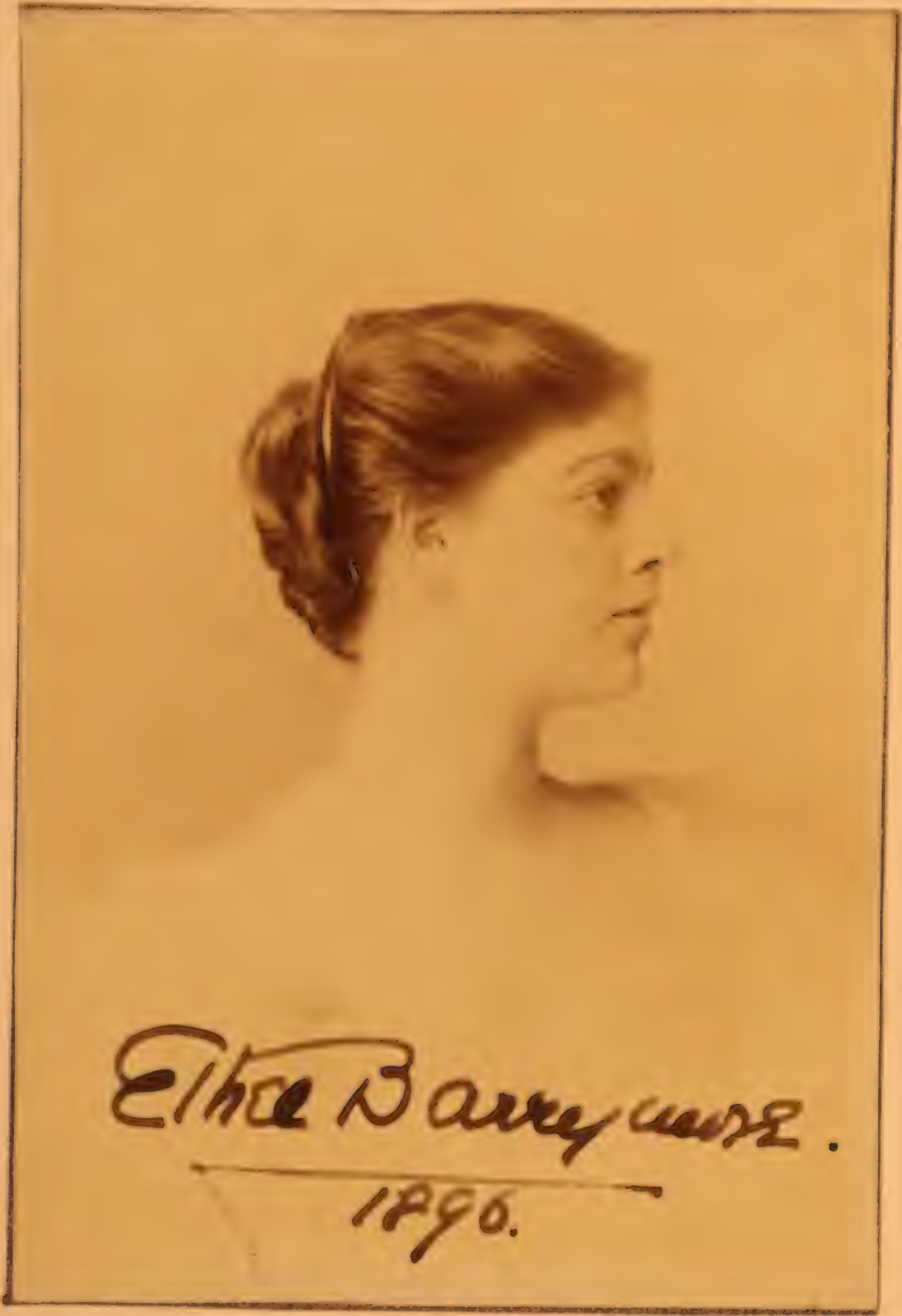
Boston 1903.

E. B. and Bruce McRae
in
'The Country House'

classical music even in those days, and though classical music was a bit over my head, that mattered little to me if I could sit by her side while she enjoyed it. How often we have laughed over that afternoon!

The next year she came to Boston again in her uncle's company, in "Rosemary", that exquisite play by Louis N. Parker and Murray Carson, which was a perfect vehicle for John Drew. I remember we first met again at a dance given by Mrs Beebe for her daughter, at her house on Commonwealth Avenue, and I had a very great advantage over my other love-sick classmates, because I knew the fair Ethel and also her uncle, whom I had met the previous year. I came rather late to that dance, having gone to the theatre first and having timed my entrance at the Beebe's to coincide with that of Mr Drew; and so it happened that he and I met in the room where the men were leaving their coats. To my utter astonishment, he recognised me. The faculty for remembering everyone whom he had ever met was one of John Drew's outstanding traits, and he came up to me and said:- "Hello Higginson; it's nice to see you again. I've brought my niece Ethel with me. You remember her, don't you? Will you introduce us to our hostess - we don't know her."

Did I remember his niece ? Would I introduce them to Mrs. Beebe ? I was thrilled to the marrow; and when the lovely Ethel said charming things to me as we met outside in the hall - well, my heart beat so that I could hardly speak! We three went down the stairs together and as we stood on the landing looking down on the dancers in the hall below, someone caught sight of us and the whisper "there's Ethel Barrymore" ran around the room like wildfire. She did look lovely that night, in her party frock of white tulle, with a great bunch of roses in her hand, standing beside her uncle. I remember going down stairs and presenting her and Drew to Mrs Beebe, and then moving off to dance with her - the envy of all Harvard undergraduates who were present. I saw quite a good deal of her that Spring - "Rosemary" had a long run in Boston - and I gave a little Tea for her at my rooms at Wadsworth House in Cambridge, to which "Uncle Jack" also came. What a charmer she was! Everyone who met her fell in love with her - I among others - and with all of us she was just the same sweet simp



Ethel Barrymore.

1896.

charming girl - though she would look at no one of us.

She went abroad shortly after that, in the company of William Gillette, who took his great Civil War play - "Secret Service" - to London; and I went over to New York - ostensibly to see my old friend and classmate, Harry Woodruff, who was in the same company, off - but really to see Ethel. I barely spoke to her on the ship; she was surrounded by admirers from all over the country; and the poor little Harvard Sophomore had only time to say "Bon Voyage" and "Au Revoir" before the "All Ashore" gong sounded. I didn't see her again for three years, but at that time she came to Boston on her first starring venture - "His Excellency The Governor" - and I saw very little of her then. for I had just become engaged myself, and my fiancée had no great love for my friendships with charming actrsses. But I did manage to give a lunch at Cambridge - at my Club there - and I saw something of her a year later, when she played in the first production of "Captain Jinks" at the Park Theatre, in which she was supported by that delightful English actor, H. Reeves Smith. After that our paths seemed to lie in different directions, and although I think I saw all the plays in which she acted and watched with interest her steady rise in the theatrical world, I saw very little of her in an intimate way until she came to Boston in a dramatization of Mrs Sedgewick's "Tante", in 1914. Charlie Cherry, one of my most intimate friends, was her leading man, and I remember that on the afternoon of his arrival in Boston, he rang up my wife on the telephone and asked us to come to the theatre that night to see the opening performance and to come to supper afterwards. We went, and of course Ethel was at the supper, and was her most delightful self. And how charming she was! I don't think that I have ever known anyone who could make herself more attractive, when she wanted to. She didn't always want to, for she was pretty tired sometimes, and like most great artists, she was moody; but that night I came away with the feeling that I had refound an old friend; and had it not been for the fact that I was very much in love with my own wife, well - I'm afraid I should have "fallen" again.

We saw a lot of her that Spring and I remember that she came out to Lincoln for a couple of week-ends, and I can almost hear her now, playing the piano

in my big Hall for hours at a time. She always has played with great charm, and also with a power that is quite out of the ordinary for anyone who is not a professional pianist. Of course the leading part in "Tante" is a professional pianist, and Ethel was in great form that year and played for us a great deal. Although, as I have said, I had not seen much of her during the years that intervened between 1900 and 1914, I don't suppose there were any of her plays that I didn't see and enjoy. Her beauty was the sort that became even greater as the years went by, and her voice - always one of her greatest attributes - gained in depth and power until it was like a 'cello in its sweetness and sympathy - particularly in the lower register. I shall never forget her rendition of the speech in "Alice-sit-by-the-fire," which begins, "Good-bye boys - I don't mean you - I mean your fathers." It used to make me cry every time I heard it, and now that I am getting older myself, it affects me even more. Bruce MacRae was with her in that too.

The War came along shortly after this, and I didn't see much of Ethel or anyone else for several years, but in 1919 I saw her several times, in a play called "Declassee", which filled the Empire Theatre in New York for a season. I remember especially one night when she came to supper with me at the Crystal Room at the Ritz Hotel - she and her sister-in-law, who had married her brother Jack. I don't think I ever saw Ethel as beautiful as she was that night. She had on a black dress - black is always becoming to a really beautiful woman - she was as slight as a girl and her exquisite profile was as clear-cut and sharp as a cameo. I had always said that, in my opinion, Maxine Elliott was the most beautiful dark woman that I had ever known and Ethel Barrymore the most beautiful fair one; and that night I was sure of it. I never saw her looking so radiantly lovely.

To tell of our various meetings would be only repetition. I used to see her whenever I had a chance - sometimes behind the scenes for a few minutes after a play, sometimes at luncheon or supper - but her ways lay in many parts of our broad land and mine usually on my farm at Lincoln; so that we saw each other mainly at such times as she was playing in Boston, unless I happened to be in some city in which she was

playing. One winter she appeared at the Hollis Street Theatre, in a comedy called "Our Mrs McChesney", and it so happened that my son, who was at that time about fourteen years old, was at home from school on a vacation. One night I suggested that we might go in to Boston and dine and go to a theatre; and, as it was to be his party, I asked him what play he would like to see. Quick as a flash came the answer:- "I'd like to see Ethel Barrymore." Like father like son, I thought to myself, and nothing loath, I ordered two seats for the Hollis Street Theatre in the front row. We went in Town to dine, and as we were almost at the end of our dinner, he said to me:- "You knew Miss Barrymore quite well, Father, don't you ?" "Yes", I answered, "why ?" " Do you suppose you could take me back to see her after the play ?" he asked. I said I was quite sure that I could, and then and there I scribbled a little note to my old friend and told her that we were in front and would like to come back and see her after the final curtain, if we might. I sent it around to the theatre, and on o our arrival there, found a message saying that she would be delighted to see us. My boy was in the Seventh Heaven, and when Ethel saw us in the front row and smiled at him, his happiness was complete. In a comedy such as the one she played that night, it was easy for a clever actress to play to anyone in the front row, and that is exactly what Ethel did. It was a charming gesture, and you may be very sure that Henry's father appreciated it fully as much as he did. We went back afterwards - to the old "Star Dressing Room" in the Hollis Street Theatre, which so many great actors have occupied, and the Star who was there that night was as charming to that boy of mine as she had been to his father, many many years before. We had a pleasant chat with her and then took our leave, for I knew that she was tired and wanted to get home to her rest, and as the Dressing Room door closed behind us, Henry turned to me and said, with boyish enthusiasm:- "Gee, Father - that's some girl!" I heard a faint laugh from inside the room and knew - as he did not - that his remark had been plainly audible through the open transom above the door.

In 1926, she came to Lincoln again. I had just been married to Mary Newcomb, whose work on the stage she had followed with interest and admiration,

and we were both anxious to have her as our guest at our home at "Middlesex Meadows". I remember waiting for her at the Stage Door of Keith's Theatre, where she was appearing in Sir James Barrie's little one act play, "The Twelve Pound Look". Almost next door, on Mason Street, was the Stage Entrance of the Boston Theatre, which I had haunted many years before, when "Fantasma" was playing there; and as the minutes passed my mind went back to the days when I had waited for other girls during the years when, as an undergraduate, I came in to see the many musical comedies that played in that historic house. Presently, Ethel came out, looking as lovely as ever, and together we motored out through the silent countryside where our home was situated, over the same road that Paul Revere had ridden many years before, on a less peaceful errand.

We had a delightful week-end with her in the country, and found her as charming and sweet as in the old days; and it is my memory of that visit which will ever linger in my mind - for although we have seen something of her from time to time, on our visits to New York - we live nowadays in different hemispheres, and our paths cross but seldom.

And what of that debonair figure, John Drew, whom I came to know so well in after years ? First, as a successful actor, then as the fair Ethel's "Uncle Jack", and then as the dear friend he became. What fun we have had together ! The first time I saw him on the stage was at Daly's Theatre in New York, when he played "Petruccio" to Ada Rehan's "Katherine", long before he became a successful star. I saw him too at the Hollis Street Theatre, where he used to come, with Maude Adams as his leading woman, in such delightful comedies as "The Butterflies" and "Christopher Junior" and "Rosemary". There were more serious dramas too - "The Bauble Shop," of which I have already spoken, and "The Liars" by Pinero - and romantic plays like "Richard Carvel"; but I think that John's strongest claim to fame as an actor was always his portrayal of the sort of charming courteous gentleman that he was himself. His was a happy life, lived amid a host of friends - both on and off the stage - and no more delightful household existed than his country home at Southampton, Long Island,

which was shared by his daughter Louise and Mrs Drew, who though not a great actress, played with him for many years - as did his brother-in-law, Lewis Baker. My first meeting with ~~him~~ Drew began a friendship which lasted for over thirty years, and during that time, I think there was hardly an "Opening Night" of any of his plays in Boston which did not find him as my guest for supper after the final curtain. "Rosemary", of which I have already spoken, was among the earliest of his ventures into what is known as a "costume part", after he became a star. In New York it was a tremendous success, but when it came to Boston, the hypercritical theatre-goers of that city were apparently not too well pleased with it - if one may judge from the following letters-

"The Brunswick Hotel,
"January 15, 1897.

"My dear Higginson:

"Many thanks for your very kind invitation for the 21st, which I accept with much pleasure, and equally many thanks for your kind expressions about 'Rosemary'. It is a pretty and charming play, isn't it? I wish that more of my friends in Boston were of your strong opinion regarding it, and of your method of showing their liking! Not that I murmur, mind you; but I fancied, before I came here, that it was such a play as would take a very strong hold upon the mass of theatre-goers - as it did in New York - apart from the cultivated and initiate in things dramatic. Such, I regret to say, has not been the case; I mean, judging from the attendance this week. However - quot homines tot sententias - and if they don't all like it, they don't and that is all!

" I am having a very delightful stay in this most hospitable of towns and enjoying myself hugely. Pray come in and see us often before the 31st.

"Very sincerely yours,

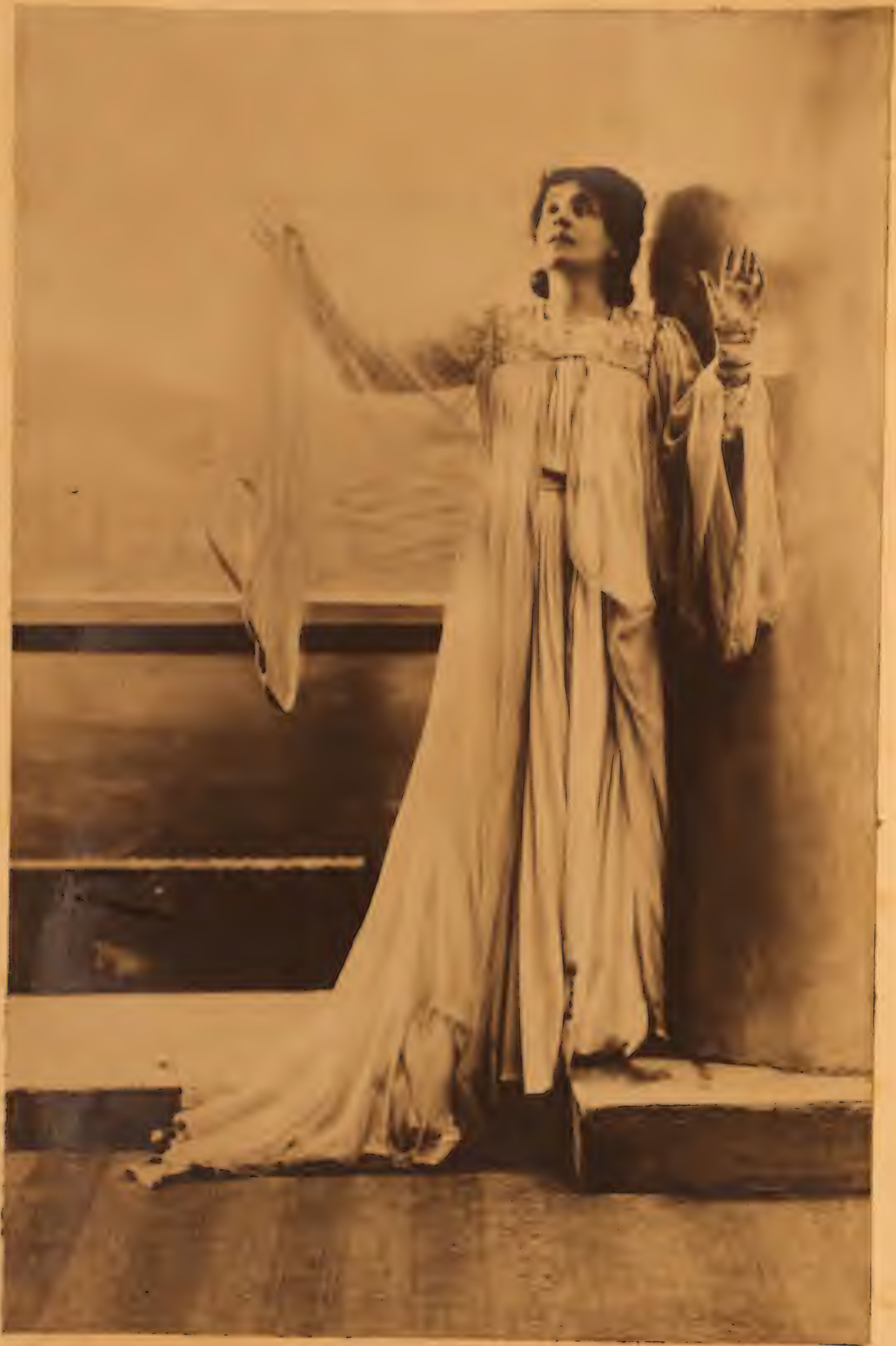
JOHN DREW "

The invitation to which he referred in this letter was to a Tea for his niece, Ethel Barrymore, which I gave at my College rooms at Harvard University.

There were quite a few people from Boston there, as well as some of my classmates at Cambridge, and I very well remember that my Grandmother, Mrs Louis Agassiz, who was at that time President, as well the Founder of Radcliffe College - I think the first university for the higher education of women which received the benefit of exactly the same instruction, by the same professors, as that meted out to the members of Hravard University - was greatly charmed with John Drew. They sat, with their heads together, in earnest conversation, most of the afternoon, to the disappointment of many of the younger ladies, who wished to lionize "Uncle Jack."

Two other incidents are very vivid in my memory - one of a Sunday afternoon at Lincoln when John and Mrs Drew came to lunch with us, and John spent the entire afternoon coasting on a toboggan with Pauline Fenno's four little girls - again to the chagrin of a couple of attractive young matrons who were eager to flirt with the famous star. The other incident was some years later, when he and I acted as ushers at the performance which Henry Miller gave of "The Taming of Helen", at the little town of Marion, Massachusetts. Richard Harding Davis, from whose story ("The Lion and the Unicorn") the play had been made, lived there; and he and his wife conceived the idea of having a special performance for the benefit of the townspeople. Henry Miller had been persuaded to bring his entire company down to Marion, which was only a short journey by rail from Boston, and we all left one morning in a special train from the South Station. John was playing in Boston at the time and he and I came down as Davis's guests. What a lark that was !

The last time I saw John Drew on the stage he was playing the part of "Sir William Gower" in a revival of Pinero's comedietta "Trelawney of The Wells", which charmed London - and then New York - at the close of the last century. The play was first produced in New York, at the Lyceum Theatre, in 1896; but the performance of which I speak was at Boston, nearly thirty-years later. John came out to "Middlesex Meadows" to spend a week-end with us, and I remember remarking to my wife that he seemed to have aged a great deal and to have lost much of his old resiliency.



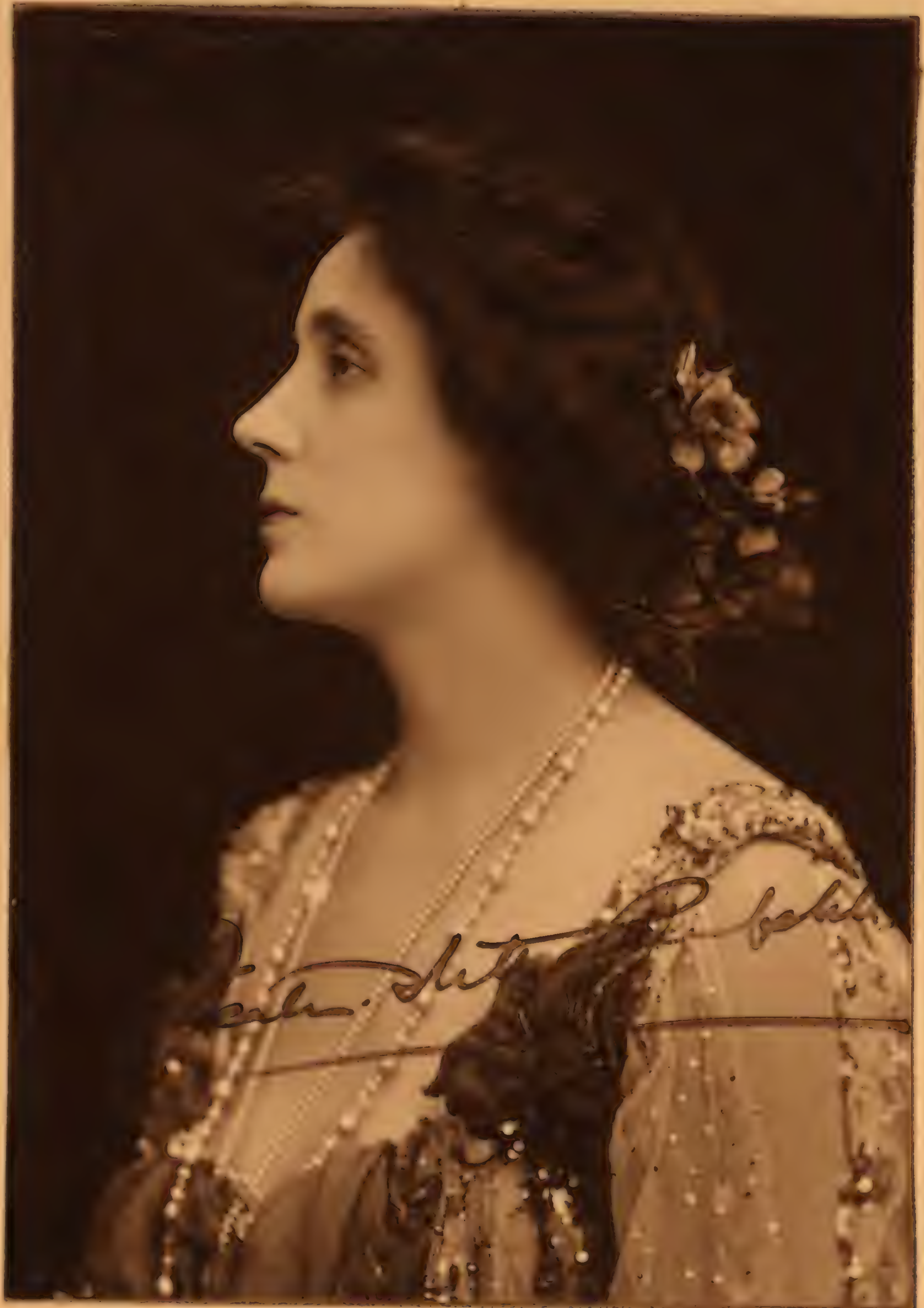
Ellen Terry.

1902.

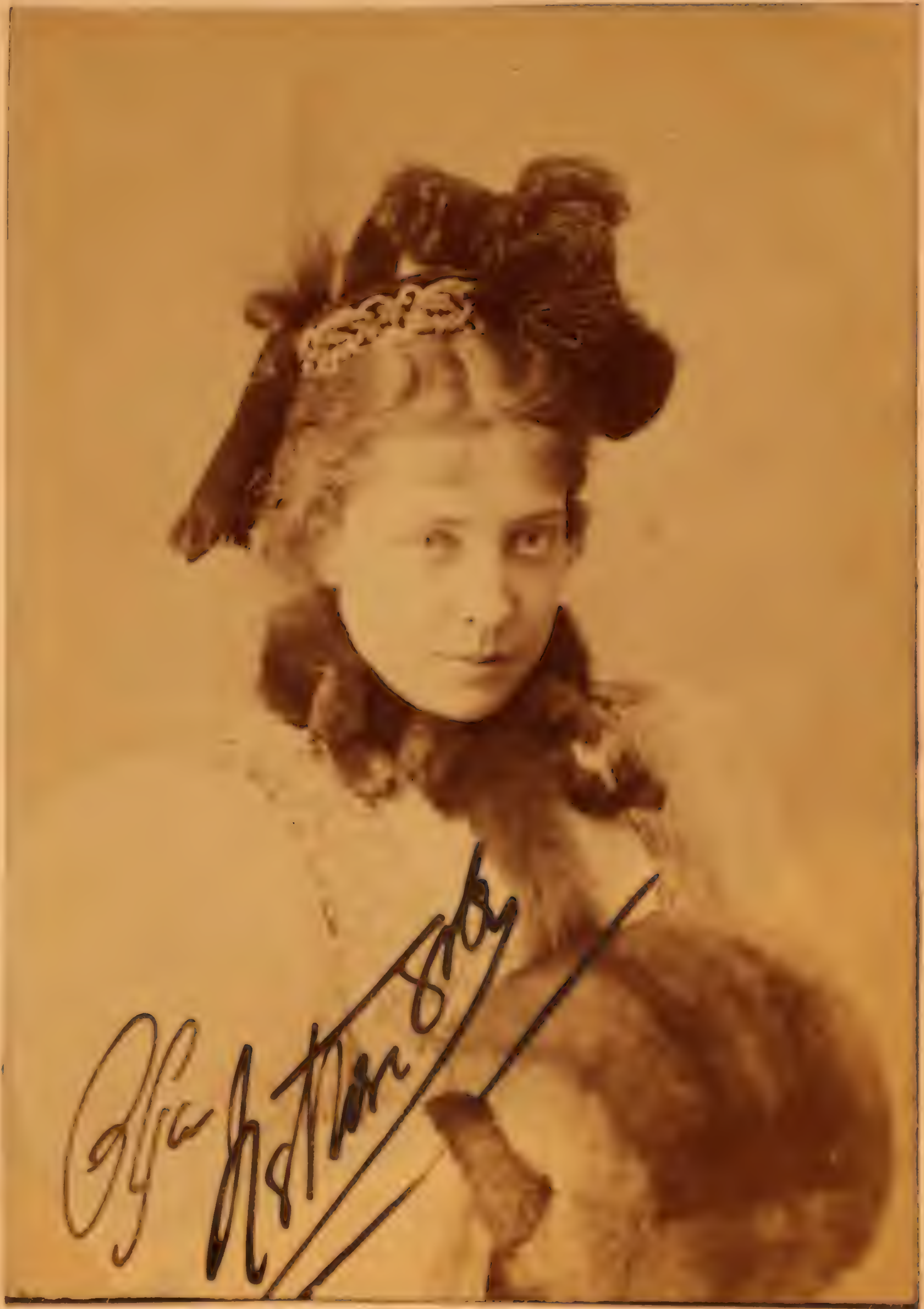
But he was as bright and cheerful as ever, and I did not think, when I said "Good-bye" to him after his last Boston performance, that I should never see him again. A few months later news came to me that he had died in San Francisco, after a short illness - died in harness - as he would have wished. He may not have been a great actor, but he was something more - a great gentleman.

During my second year at Harvard I lived, with my room-mate Philip Dalton, in pleasant rooms in Wadsworth House - I think the only wooden building and one of the oldest - in the College Yard. Although our rooms had few modern conveniences, they had an old-fashioned charm of their own, and the large open fire-place in our Study added cheerfulness to a room which was once occupied by General George Washington when he had his Headquarters in Cambridge, at the time he took command of the Continental Army. During my Sophomore year, Eleanora Duse, the great Italian actress, came to Boston; and since my Father had charge of her business affairs, we saw something of her during her stay. One day, my Mother said that she (Duse) had expressed a desire to visit "an American student's rooms", and suggested that she might bring her to our quarters at Wadsworth House. Phil Dalton and I were hardly "students" in the true sense of the word, but we were undergraduates, and of course were thrilled at the idea and made great preparations for her reception. She came; had Tea with us; and expressed herself as delighted - in very broken English - and sent us each a signed photograph, very much as Royalty might have done. Mine hangs on my wall to-day.

Duse was a queer charcter, and like many great artists, very temperamental. I remember once that she told my Mother that she wished to meet certain rather important people in Boston, and asked her if she could arrange it. Mother, of course, said "yes"; asked Duse to set the date; and invited them to luncheon. The luncheon was set for half-past one, but the minutes passed and there was no sign of the actress. Finally at quarter past two, a rather frightened maid told my Mother that "the Italian lady was in the Library"; had been there for half an hour, walking up and down the floor; and that she had asked to see "Excellenza" - meaning, she sup-



Mrs Patrick Campbell



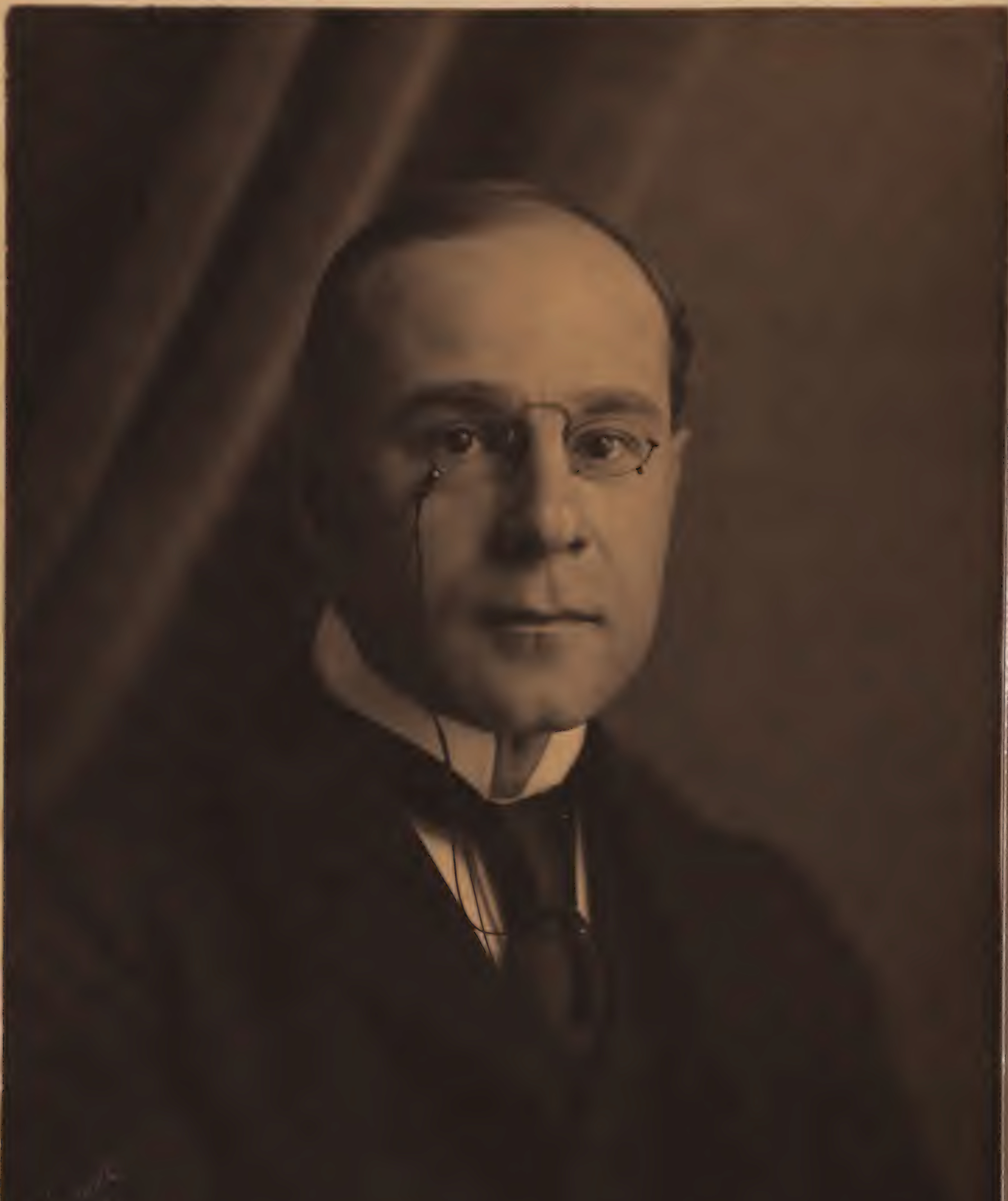
Olga Nethersole

Mrs. Patrick Campbell

[illegible]

posed, ~~meaning, she supposed~~, my Mother. Mother, of course, went to her, and Duse who seemed to be in a state of great excitement, istead of excusing herself for being late, said that she did not wish to see the people who had been asked to meet her; that she wished my Father summoned from the office at once, as she wanted him to make arrangements for her to leave for Italy the next morning. My Mother was a singularly calm resourceful woman, and instead of arguing with her, she pretended to acquiesce to her request; left the room and told her guests to sit down to luncheon, and that she would bring Duse in a few moments. She then went back to Duse and told her - mendaciously I am afraid - that she had been in communication with my Father and that arrangements were being made to carry out her wishes. She then suggested that lunch might be a good idea, and Duse, relieved of her worries, came in to luncheon; was as charming as possible; delighted them all; and left after a very pleasant visit - having quite forgotten the Italian journey, which was never mentioned again. Queer people - these inhabitants of the dramatic world!

Looking back on those early days when I first began to take serious interest in the theatre, it seems to me that England sent us - or perhaps I should say "lent us" - its best histrionic talent. Henry Irving; Charles Wyndham; John Hare; Forbes Robertson;- they are all names to conjure with in theatrical history - and I can remember seeing all of them on the stage of the Boston theatres - nor must I forget the Kendalls, nor Dame Ellen Terry, nor that emotional actress of a later period, Mrs Patrick Campbell, whose "Paula Tanqueray" will always be to me one of the greatest characterizations of Pinero's unfortunate heroine that I have ever seen. Most of them I saw and met in my College days, and I have often wondered in recent years at their courtesy to the young undergraduate who, after all, had little to offer them for their kindness after their day's work was over. I did not know the theatrical profession in those days as I know it now, and never realised that the actor belongs to the public over the footlights, but that, once his performance is over, he becomes a private individual, often with a home and a family of his own. This was particularly true of one of America's most distinguished actors, Richard Mansfield,



Richard Mansfield

who once wrote to me, when I urged him to come to supper "any night he liked";-

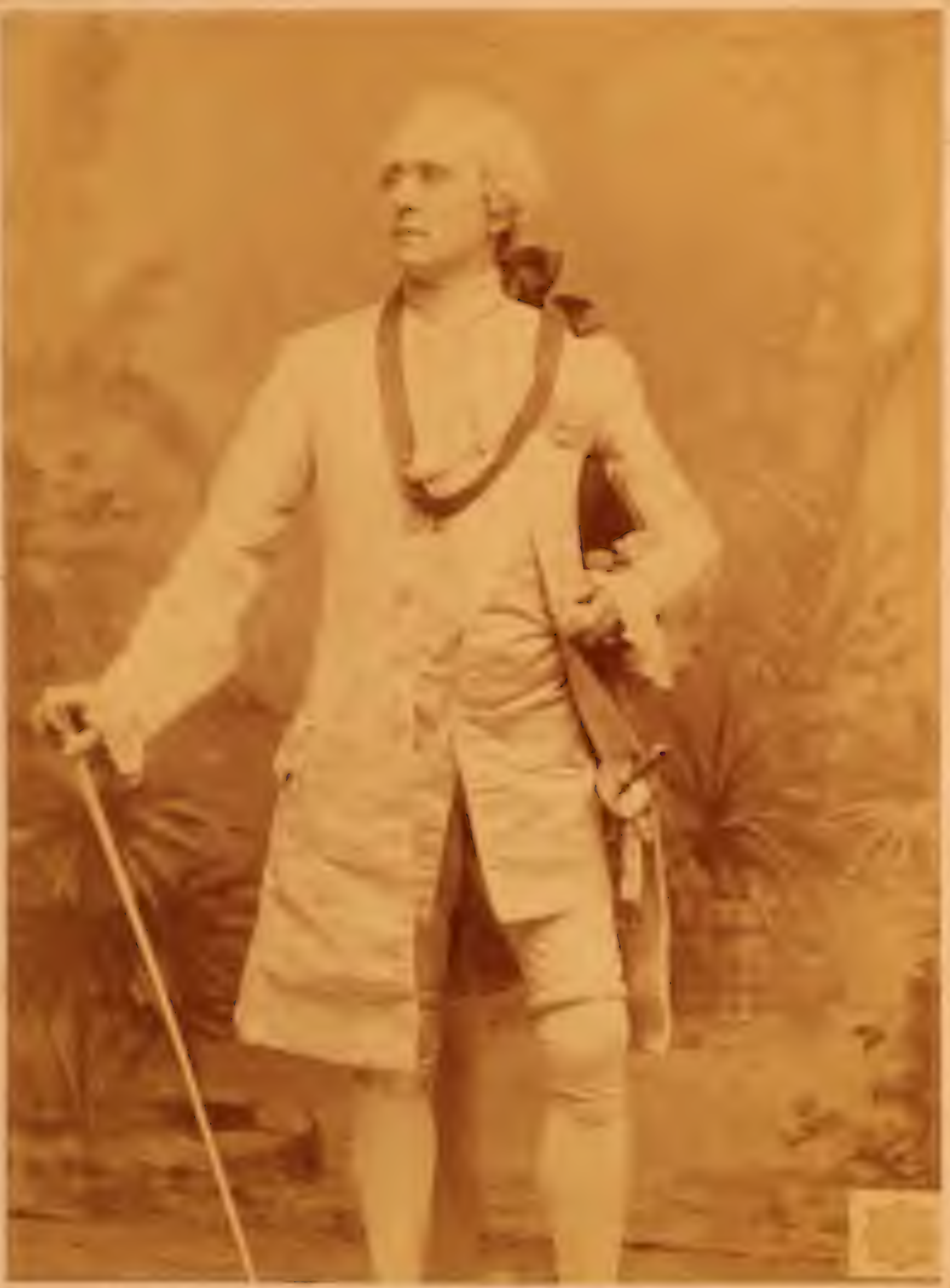
"Dear Mr Higginson:

"I've been so overworked that I've not had time to reply to your very kind note. I am sorry to say that I rarely go out to supper; I am generally too tired,- if I indulge at all it is in the very bosom of some friendly family. Public places I ever avoid. Nearly every animal of my species rests or ruminates after half past four, both the singing specimen and the talking specimen. In the afternoon, we go through preliminary capers, and in the morning we learn the words we speak at night, or attend to the business side of the thing. If the weather be fair to-morrow, I shall be happy to see you at two o'clock.

"Faithfully,

RICHARD MANSFIELD"

He was an odd charcator, high-strung and irritable, and often misunderstood by people who did not know him; but a charming host and delightful companion none the less - outside of working hours. I met him during the time I was in College and the manner of our acquaintance is perhaps worth mentioning. I had seen him in all his charcters - as the debonair "Prince Karl"; in Octave Feuillet's "Parisian Romance"; in George Bernard Shaw's "Arms and the Man"; in the sinister"Doctor Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde"; and in many others. He was a hard man to get to know; for once his work was over, he retired entirely from public life and wished to see no one except his old friends. In spite of the fact that I knew of this idiosyncrasy on his part, I had the audacity to invite him to supper with me - with the result above mentioned. As he suggested in that note, I betook myself, in due course, to the Hotel Vendome in Boston, where he was stopping, and presented my card at the desk, only to be told that Mr Mansfield was out. Chagrined, I went back to my Father's house to dine.. How "R.M." knew where I was I do not know, but late that afternoon a note came over from the Vendome, apologising for his absence and explaining that he had been forced to attend to some legal matters of which he had known nothing when he had written



Herbert Beerbohm Tree

in
'The Seats of the Mighty'

[illegible]

asking me to come that afternoon.

Well,- that was that,- and knowing that it was his last week in Boston, I despaired of meeting him that year. One last performance he had that week. I had had my seat booked for some time, as they were in great demand. I was dining at my Father's house in Town that night, and when I came in from Cambridge the maid handed me a note, which she said had just come. I knew "R.M.'s" handwriting well by that time and I saw at a glance that it was from him and that it was marked "Immediate". I tore it open and this is what I read:-

> " My dear Mr Higginson: If you have nothing better to do, come to the theatre this evening - where I have reserved a box for you, and if you care for it, join us here at the Vendome afterwards for supper."

I was thrilled - so thrilled that I never thought of sharing my box with anyone, or even suggesting to my family that any of them should accompany me. I went alone to the Box Office of the theatre; asked for my tickets; and was ushered to the box, where I sat in solitary glory and watched the performance. After the play I went to the Vendome, as instructed, and this time I was not disappointed. There was "R.M." with Mrs Mansfield waiting to welcome me, and so charming and hospitable were they that, in a moment, all my shyness at meeting the great actor, vanished, and I was merely chamed by the man.

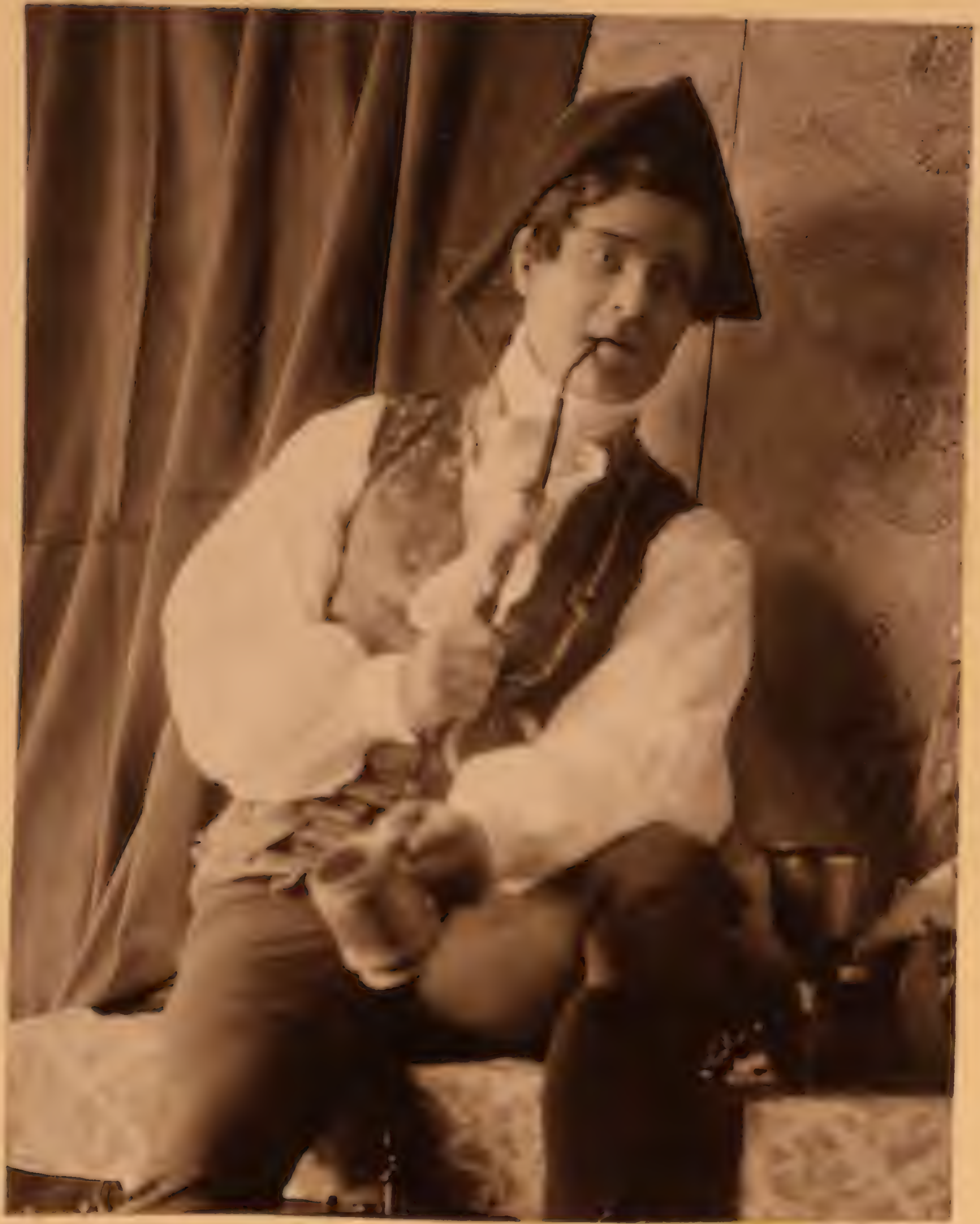
That was the first of many nights on which I supped with "R.M.", for he acquired a habit of asking me to supper with him after his first night performances in Boston; and when I became engaged and brought my fiancée to the theatre, he included her in the invitations. We came to know him very well, and one summer, after we were married, spent a week with him and Mrs Mansfield at their house at Southampton, Long Island. Booth Tarkington was stopping with them at the time, working with "R.M." on the dramatisation of "Monsieur Beaucaire",- that charming story which was the first of Tarkington's many successes; and I recall many pleasant evenings that were spent in talking over plans for its production during the coming winter. The play was a great success, and when Mansfield came to Boston later in

Richard Mansfield
in
"Prince Karl"

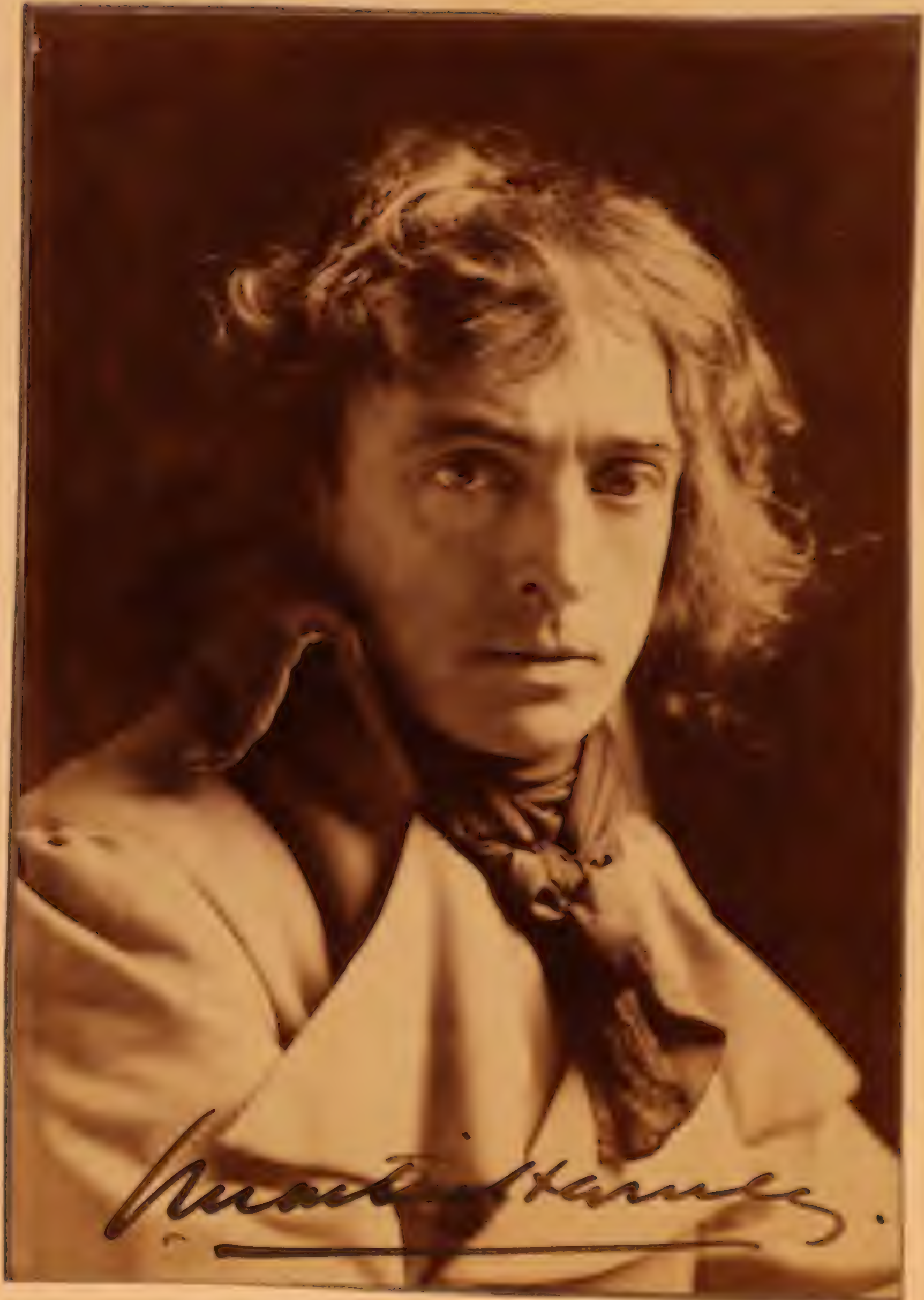
the year, we saw a great deal of him, supping with him frequently after his performances and acting as his hosts over many week-ends.

I have always felt that Richard Mansfield was one of the really great actors that America has produced; though one must always remember that his father was an Englishman; his mother the great Russian Prima Donna, Madame Rudersdorff, and that he himself was born in Heligoland. He was a very versatile actor and his repertoire contained plays in which the characters portrayed by him ran the complete gamut of the emotions. He was proud of this fact and was accustomed, on the last night of his stay in many of the large cities where he had been playing an engagement, to present a programme made up of various acts in the different plays in his repertoire; which, though it displayed his versatility wonderfully, always seemed to me an inartistic thing to do. He had a most beautiful house in New York and when he was playing in that city and living at home, I often went up there to dinner on Sunday nights. One was apt to meet very interesting people at these Sunday evening gatherings; for every distinguished artist, actor, musician, or literary genius usually found his way to the house on Riverside Drive sooner or later. One never knew who would be there, or next to whom one might sit at dinner, or what kind of odd entertainment would be provided afterwards. Mansfield may have been a difficult man to work with in the theatre, but as a host and a friend he was ideal.

I have been told by people who played with him that he was very arbitrary at times, and I can well believe that to anyone who tried to shirk he must have been a hard taskmaster; for his own capacity for work was enormous and he expected everyone to work as hard as he did. Those men - and women - who had the wisdom to get the best out of their association with him were greatly benefitted by his teaching, and not a few of them rose to stardom later on. Of the men in his company, Henry Jewett, who was with him for many years, later founded a theatre and a school of acting of his own in Boston, which brought him fame and riches; and William Courtenay - for many years a leading man - finally became a successful star. Three of his leading women were well known on the American stage - Grace Elliston; Beatrice



Mansfield as "Dick Dudgeon"
in
"The Devil's Disciple"


Martin Harvey.

Sir Martin Harvey

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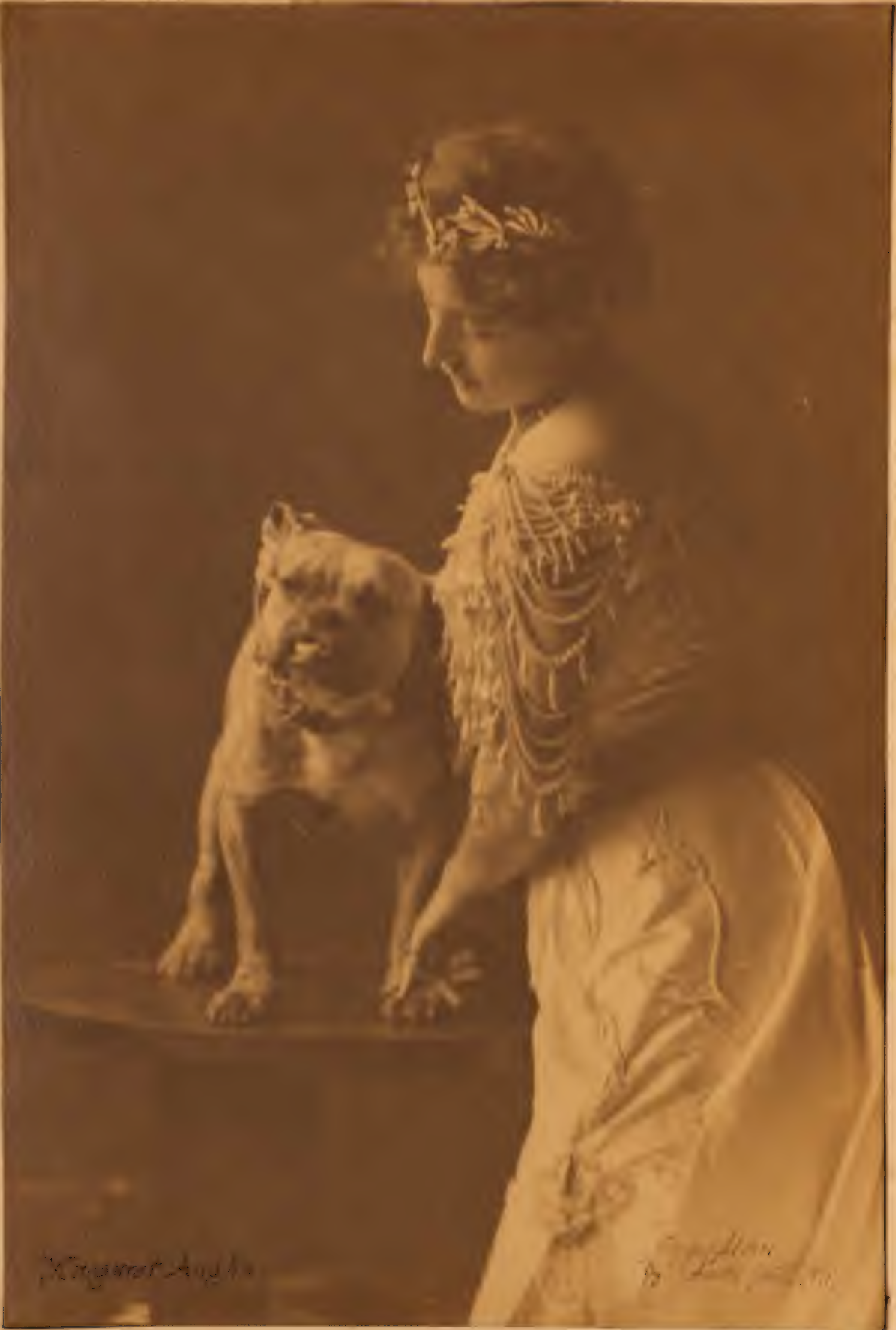
Cameron; and Margaret Anglin. Of Miss Anglin I shall speak later, but it is of Beatrice Cameron - whom I knew as Mrs Mansfield - that I have perhaps the happiest memories. She played with her husband for several years and was a gracious foil to the satirical brilliant parts that he played. When she retired from the stage she was an equally charming hostess - both in New York and in their delightful summer home at Southampton. I cannot remember just when Richard Mansfield died - I should think it was about ~~thirty~~ fifty-five years ago - but I lost contact with him a year or two before that time; for he was a very sick man at the end.

¶ One day in London, in 1930, I came home to my wife's little house in Town to find her seated at luncheon with a guest, who, though she looked strangely familiar, I could not place for the moment. I was a bit late and was apologising to my wife, thinking that she would introduce me, when the guest looked at ~~me~~ [illegible] and said with a smile:- "You don't remember me, do you, Alex ?" - and then I knew that it was the wife of my old friend; and in an instant all the happy days we had passed together twenty years before came back to me. We had a pleasant hour together that day, and then she and my wife went off to see Sir Martin Harvey in a play of Bernard Shaw's - "The Devil's Disciple" - in which she and "R.M." had played together more than twenty-five years before. I have never seen her since that day, but I think she still lives in that lovely house on the Connecticut shore, where "R.M." ended his days.

One of Mansfield's greatest triumphs on the stage was undoubtedly his portrayal of Rostand's romantic character "Cyrano de Bergerac", and though I did not know him intimately at that time, I of course saw the play and knew a few of the people in the cast. William Courtenay was with him then, and his leading woman was Margaret Anglin. I remember my first meeting with her. One night, I had gone to supper with Mansfield, who happened to be playing in Boston, and he said to me:- "I've got a guest coming to-night; I think you'll be interested in meeting her. She is the leading woman in the Empire Stock Company, which is playing at the Hollis Street Theatre now." Oddly enough, I had been that very night to see the opening of "Mrs. Dane's Defence", in which Miss Anglin had the leading part, and I had been



Margaret Anglin

much struck with her exquisite handling of the principle part in Henry Arthur Jones's play - which even to-day holds its place in the drama of that period. Presently Miss Anglin turned up, and when I saw her, I recognized her at once as the woman who had played the part of "Roxane" in "Cyrano", and of whom a well known New York critic said: " An unknown young woman of the name of Margaret Anglin will wake up this morning and find herself famous. She acted "Roxane", the *precieuse* heroine, and acted it with such authority, refinement, tenderness and grace, that you wondered where she had acquired all these gifts. She possesses no great personal beauty perhaps, but in all other ways is lavishly endowed by Nature, predestined indeed to play an important part in the history of the American stage."

We had an amusing evening, and Miss Anglin and "R.M." were continually twitting each other about their past differences, during the year in which they played together. I fancy Miss Anglin's engagement with "R.M." was anything but peaceful. Suddenly he turned to me and said:- "Do you know what this girl said to me when I first talked with her about playing 'Roxane'? I shook my head. "I aksed her if she thought she was beautiful enough to play the part. I suppose it *was* rather a brutal question; but she stood up to me - that's the reason we've always been such good friends. She said:- 'Yes, Mr Mansfield, if you're clever enough to play 'Cyrano.'" I liked her for that - I always shall."

Margaret Anglin was an attractive girl and we saw quite a bit of her, and she came out for several week-ends at Lincoln. Later, when she was playing in New York, and my wife and I were over there on a visit, we had many a supper with her at her little house on West End Avenue. She was a great actress - one of the best we had in America during the first decade of the present century - particularly in romantic parts, and I always felt that the American stage lost one of its brightest stars when she went to Australia a couple of years later. When she came back again she appeared successfully in many Shakespearean productions; but I have always felt that her best characterisation was that of the unfortunate "Felicia Hindmarsh", who as "Mrs Dane", had the principle part in "Mrs Dane's Defence".

With kind regards from,

Sincerely Yours,

Lawrance D'Orsay.

Lawrance D'Orsay
in
"The Earl of Pawtucket"

[illegible]

[illegible]

"[illegible]"

What a brilliant gathering of artists Charles Frohman had in the Empire Theatre Stock Company that year ! Charles Richman; William Courtenay and Lawrence D'Orsay - all of them stars in after years - with such women as Mrs Whiffen; Margaret Dale; Ethel Hornick and Miss Anglin herself - playing the women's parts. The season which followed the production of "Mrs Dane's Defence" was a happy one, for Irene Vanbrugh for H.V.Esmond's charming light comedy, "The Wilderness", was a great success; and at the end of the season, "Mrs Dane's Defence" was revived again and sent on the road with an "All Star" cast - in which Guy Standing later Sir Guy Standing played the part of "Sir Daniel Carteret", with Oswald Yorke playing William Courtenay's part of "Lionel". I believe that Lena Ashwell played played "Mrs Dane" in London, and when she came to America on a starring venture, it was interesting to see her conception of the main part, as compared with Miss Anglin's. Miss Ashwell's vehicle - I fail to remember its name, but the subject of the play deals with characters which depict life in South Africa - was a failure, and the talented British star was under the management of Charles Frohman, arranged to play in "Mrs Dane's Defence" with Margaret Anglin for two weeks, the two women alternating in the parts of "Mrs Dane" and "Lady Eastney", which, as old theatre-goers will remember, are of almost equal importance. With Guy Standing as "Sir Daniel" it was most interesting, and a great success. Perhaps because I am an old friend of Miss Anglin's I liked her "Mrs Dane" the better of the two,

Many stars have graduated from the Empire Theatre Stock Company - Henry Miller and William Faversham made their initial appearances there in "The Masqueraders" - one of the first of Henry Arthur Jones's plays to be successful in America. Sir George Alexnnder played it in England, as old London theatre-goers will remember, and looking up the programme of the first production, on the 28th of April, 1894, I find such names as Herbert Waring; H.V.Esmond; Ben Webster; Mrs Patrick Campbell, and Irene Vanbrugh in the supporting cast. All London successes found their way across the water in those days, for Charles Frohman bought the rights of every one of them for his galaxy of stars in America. Dear old John Drew was apt to play Wyndham's parts, and Sothern those which were taken by George Alexander. That was before the

Margaret Dale

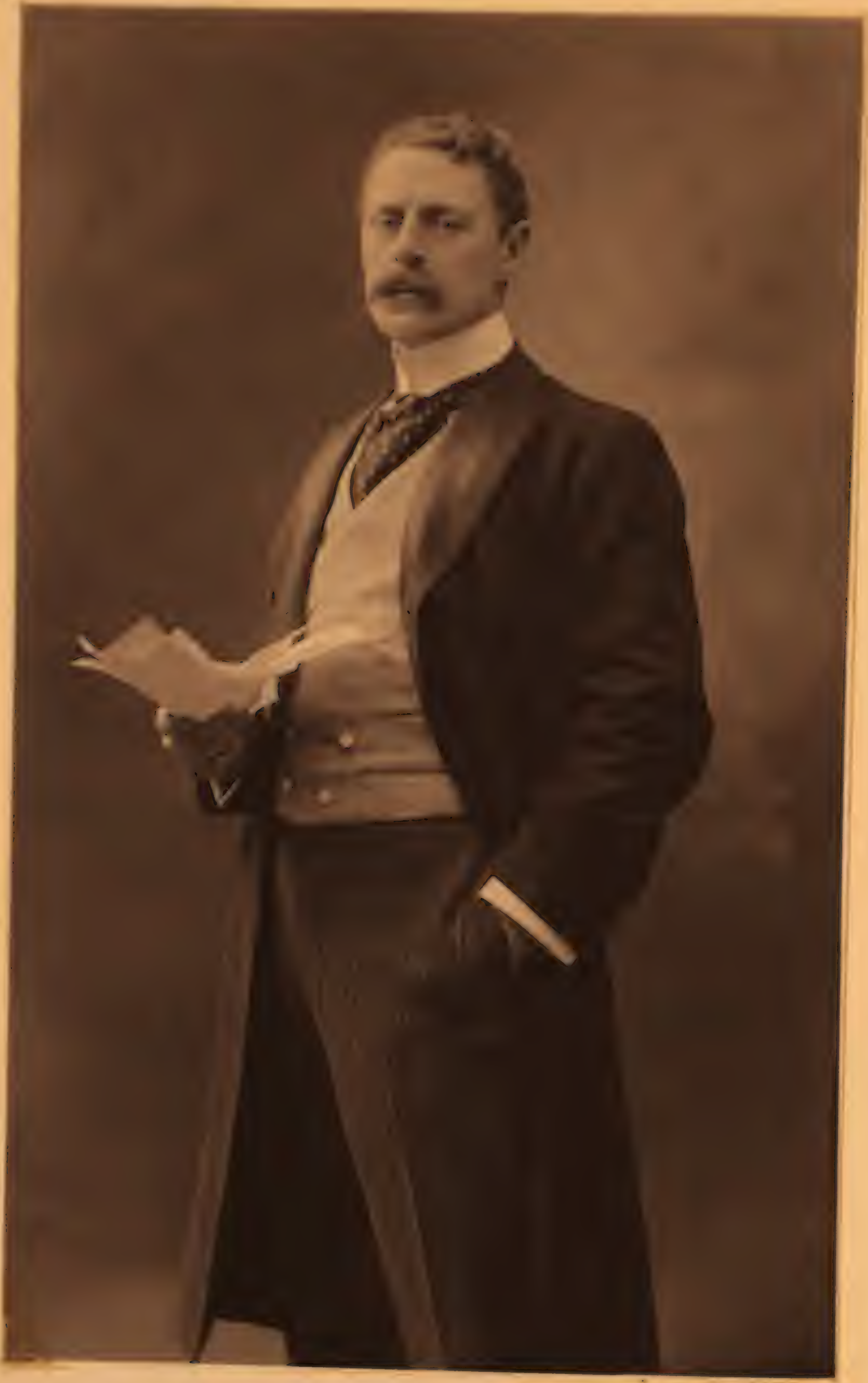
[illegible]

great influx of British leading men to America, and before the days when every successful actor felt it necessary to rise to stardom.

I think, as I look back on my acquaintance with the various members of the profession, that the night on which I ran into Fred Comee in the lobby of the Waldorf Hotel in New York was destined to be the turning point. I don't know how I happened to be in New York at that time - for I was not particularly enamoured of city life - but I had been to the theatre alone and was just about to order supper when I met Fred Comee, with a freind whom he introduced as "Mr Thompson". I took a good look at "Mr Thompson" and recognized in him one of New York's best known and best beloved character actors, whom I had often seen play "Friar Lawrence", with Julia Marlowe, in "Romeo and Juliet", or with his wife the talented Isabel Irving.

" I'm just taking Fred Comee around to The Lambs for supper, Mr Higginson," said Thompson. "Won't you come with us ? I should so enjoy having you."

Nothing loth, I accepted the invitation with pleasure, and half an hour later, I made my first entrance into the Club of which I have now been a member for more than forty years. I had never been in an actors' club before; never seen so many people whose faces I knew on the stage, in private life, and I was fascinated. There was the genial De Wolf Hopper, whose laugh could be heard across the room; the sinister Wilton Lackaye, whose performance as "Svengali" in "Trilby" will never be forgotten; and Henry Dixey of "Iolanthe" fame; and Faversham and Miller and Bill Courtleigh and Bob Edeson and a dozen others. The Club was in West 36th Street in those days and one entered almost directly into a small downstairs Grillroom witha bar at the far end, which was crowded with actors who were eating their supper, or having a drink before they went home. It seemed to me that most of the men in the cast of the play I had been to that evening were there, and presently my old friend and classmate, Harry Woodruff, came up and greeted me:- "Hello, Hig," he said. "Fancy seeing you here ! I didn't know you knew Bill Thompson." I explained the situation and introduced Comee, for although the latter had often seen Woodruff at



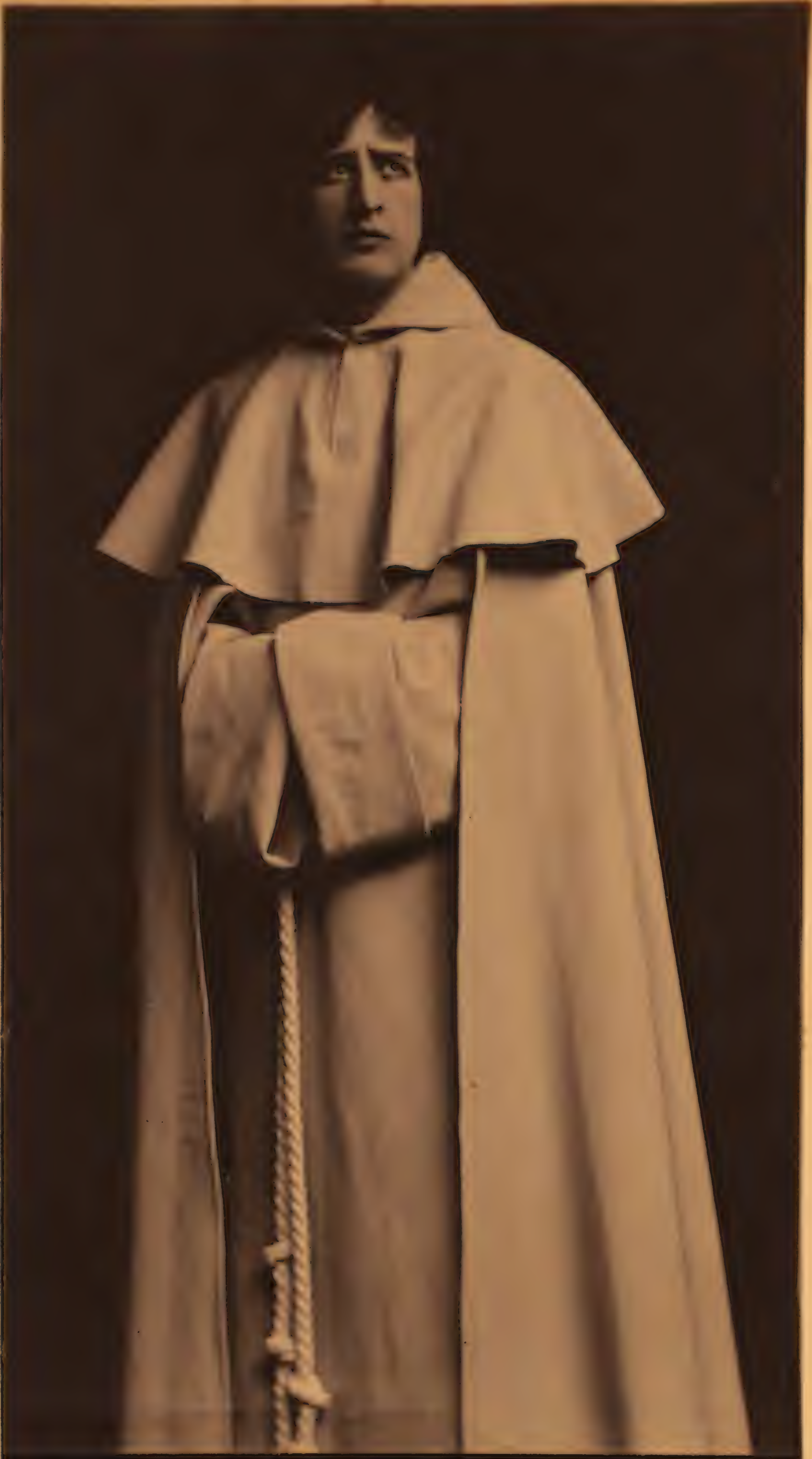
Sherlock Holmes' friend
and yours
"Watson".

Bruce McRae
as
"Watson"
in
"Sherlock Holmes"

Harvard Glee Club concerts, the two men had never met.

I should perhaps explain here that Henry Mygatt Woodruff was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1869, only four years after the close of the Civil War, and was therefore considerably older than most of his classmates at Harvard. He had been on the stage professionally for some years; prepared himself for College; and in spite of the disadvantage of his lack of social connections with any preparatory school, he had become popular with many of those who had at first kept rather aloof. We were a set of young snobs in our youth. The boys who came from the smart Boston schools - Hopkinson's and Hale's - the boys who came from Cutler's, at that time the smart school in New York, and the boys who came from the big "Prep" schools like Groton and St. Mark's and St. Paul's - thought they were a bit better than the others. As a matter of fact, our class President did come from "Hoppy's". Of course, all this snobbishness disappeared after our Freshman year, and Harry Woodruff's natural charm and talents soon made him very popular. He became a member of several of the best Clubs - among them the D.K.E., the Hasty Pudding, and the Phi Delta Psi, and in his Senior year he was President of the University Glee Club, of which he had been a prominent member for four years. It so happened that I was on the 'Varsity Banjo Club, and since I also belonged to that inner circle of the musical clubs which consisted of a double quartette of the Glee and Banjo Clubs, which toured the country at times, we naturally came to know each other very well; and on leaving College, had seen each other from time to time.

Harry knew of my fondness for the stage, and had I been a resident of New York, he would, I am sure, have taken me to the Lambs Club; but in those days the life of a young leading man was a nomadic one, and somehow I had not seen much of him after leaving College, except when he visited Boston. But here I was in his own Club in New York, and he at once set to work to make up for lost time. In the next [illegible] I think I must have met fifty percent of the men who were playing in New York at that time; eaten an enormous supper; and drunk with God knows how many new acquaintances. "The Lambs" is one of the most interesting clubs I have ever known.



in
"Queen Fiametta"

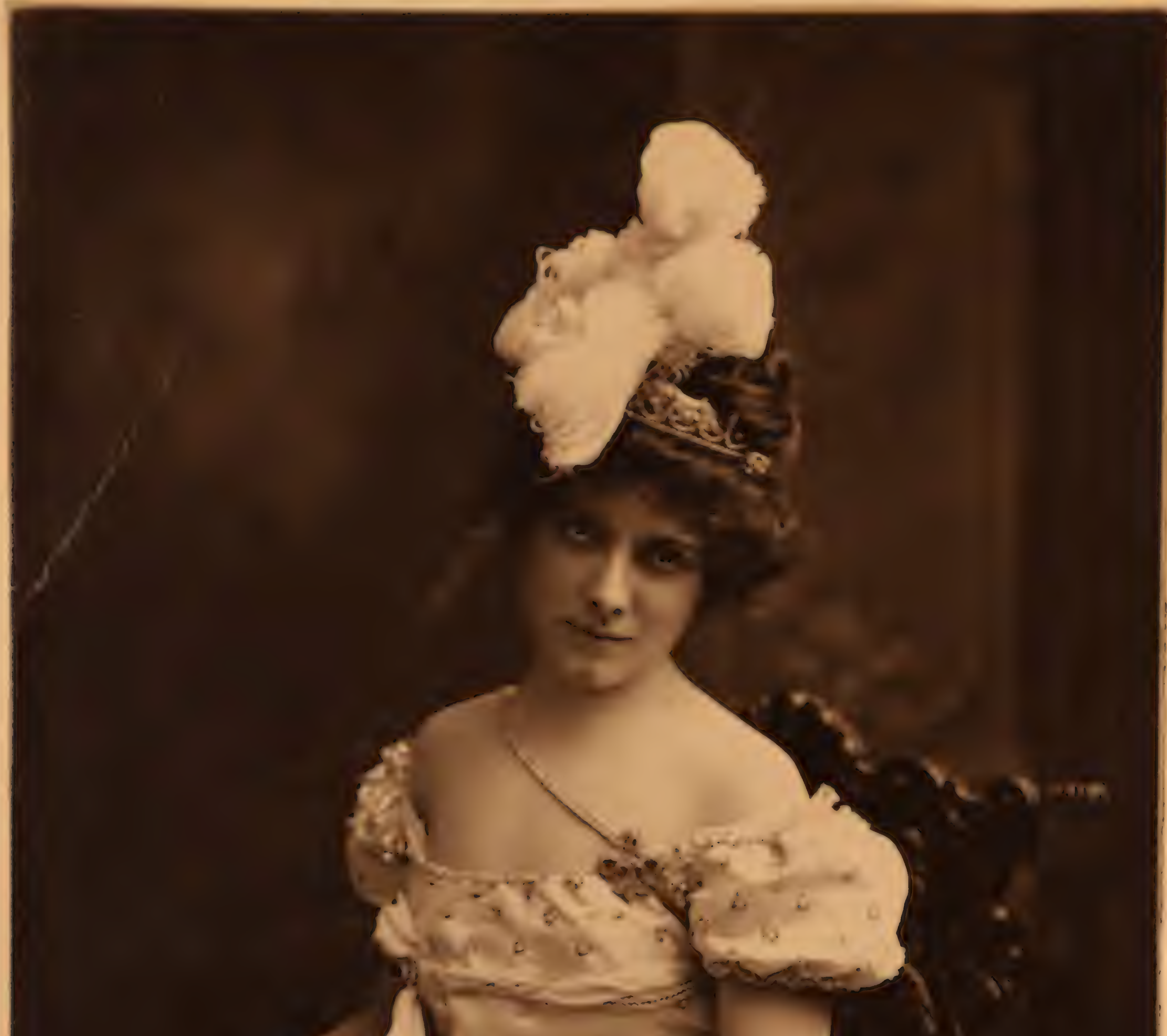
To Henry Higginson -
from Frank Worthing.

The membership, though not limited to men of the theatrical profession, is quite naturally made up principally of actors, dramatic authors, with a scattering of producers and managers, and laymen, who, like myself, were interested in the theatre, and who were classed as "Non-professional Members". In those days the Club was much smaller than it is to-day, and the little house on 36th Street, to which I was t taken that night, was one of the cosiest in New York. It was said that a stranger coming in there as a guest - or perhaps to meet some friend - was never allowed to sit alone; and I knew from personal experience that in the early days of my membership - for I joined the Club forthwith - I never sat alone at supper. Someone - maybe a friend, maybe an unknown member - would come to my table and say:- " May I sit down ? Can't we have supper together,-or won't you have supper with me ? " And it gave one a very pleasant feeling. On the night of which I speak I asked Harry to propose my name for membership, and with old Bill Thompson as seconder, I was elected to the Club at the next meeting. I have been a member ever since - and that was more than ~~forty-two~~ fifty years ago !

"The Lambs" became my headquarters whenever I visited New York alone. I often dined there or had supper in the Grillroom after the theatre. Many of my greatest friendships began in that Grillroom, and I can well remember sitting one evening at supper and talking about foxhunting with Oswald Yorke, when we were joined by a young man whose face I did not know.

" Anyone having supper with you ?" he asked. "Can I sit here ?" and he sat down. Presently the talk drifted back to hunting; and before the evening was over, I gathered that, though not a hunting man himself, he was very fond of horses. When he had left, I asked Yorke his name, and he told me that our companion was a young English actor named Robert Loraine, who had been brought over especially for the production of a dramatization of Mary Johnson's novel "To Have and To Hold", which had been a complete failure.

" Loraine has had an interesting career," he said. "He played with George Alexander in the London production of "The Prisoner of Zenda"; married Julie



JULIA MARLOWE.

In remembrance
Colinette

Julia Marlowe

Miss Marlowe

as

"Colinette"

Opp, with whom I am playing now; and left her at the end of twenty-four hours to enlist as a 'Tommy' in the Boer War. I believe he was twice mentioned in dispatches and I know he has several bars to his Service Medals. Old Barnes, who was a War correspondent there, told me that his officers couldn't say anything but good of him."

Loraine was an attractive chap, and being out of work at the time when I met him, we saw more or less of each other. Presently he got a chance and played a small part in Dion Boucicault's production of "Old Heidelberg", and since this went on the road, we drifted apart. But the next summer he came to stay with me for a couple of weeks and we got to know each other quite well; for we had many tastes in common. He was an excellent horseman and we used to ride together and had many talks in the long summer evenings. One day, he went up to Boston to do some shopping, and at dinner that night, he said to me:-

" Alex, have you ever seen any of Shaw's plays ?"

" Yes", I replied, "I saw Mansfield in 'Arms and the Man' and 'The D Devil's Disciple'; and I saw Arnold Daly in New York not so long ago in a little one act play called 'The Man of Destiny'. Why do you ask ?"

" Well," he said, "when I was in Town to-day I picked up a copy of his latest play. I started to read it coming down on the train this afternoon, but didn't finish it; and I would like to read the whole thing to you to-night, and see what you think of it. Do you mind ?"

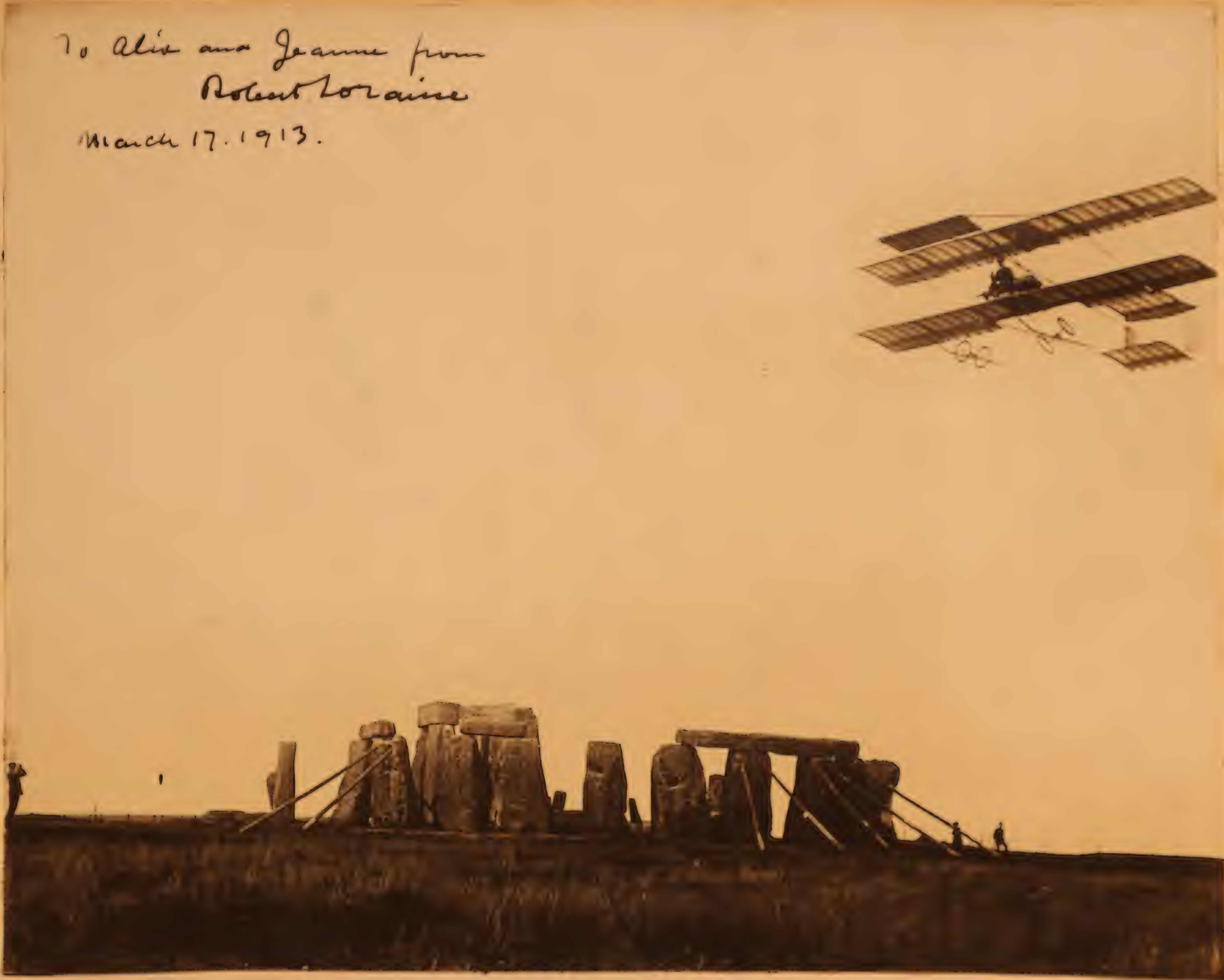
Of course I said I would enjoy it very much, and accordingly he read me "Man and Superman". As every student of Shaw knows, "Man and Superman" consists of four acts, and if presented in its entirety, would play far too long to suit the taste of the average audience. This was my first criticism when Loraine asked me what I thought of its possibilities as a commercial proposition.

" You are right, Alex," he said. "Of course no audience would sit through four acts, but I would cut out the third entirely; for after all, it has no real bearing on the rest of the play, which is quite complete without it. I think it's a great play."

I rather demurred, for although I now know that I was quite wrong, it seemed to me that, while the play read well enough, it might prove tedious to many people because of its lack of action. Loraine thought otherwise; insisted that it would prove a great success if properly produced; and ended by stating that he was going to England at once, to secure the rights of production from the author. In those days Robbie had no money and no great reputation as an actor; nor were Shaw's plays well known in America. The whole project seemed to me fantastic and I tried my best to dissuade him. It was no use; he had made up his mind; and the next day he said "Good-bye" to me; packed his bags and departed on his "quest of the golden fleece". He never was much of a letter writer, and I heard nothing of him for some time; until one day, I saw a notice in a New York paper, that he was playing there with Grace George, as her leading man. A few months later I happened to be in Montreal, where Miss George was playing at the time, and Loraine and I had supper together. I questioned him about his trip to England and he told me that he had seen Shaw; had a talk with him; and had acquired the American rights of "Man and Superman.")

" But nobody wants it," he went on. " I've showed it to several managers and they are inclined to agree with you. They think it is too fantastic; not enough action. No one will take a chance; so I've put it away for a bit, so to speak, but *you mark my words* - they will come to it yet. I'm going to produce that play in New York some day !"

And he did. In 1904, Arnold Daly was successful in several of Shaw's comedies - "Candida", "You Never Can Tell" and "The Man of Destiny" - and people began to talk about the hitherto little known author. Somebody remembered that Loraine had the American rights of "Man and Superman", and several managers offered to purchase them from him; but he stuck to his guns; it was *his* gamble; and the upshot of it was that, early in October of 1905, the play was produced at the Hudson Theatre, under the management of Charles Dilligham, with Robert Loraine playing the principal part of "John Tanner"; Alfred Hickman as "Octavius"; Lewis Casson as "Ramsden"; Edward Abels as the chauffeur; Ida Conquest as "Anne"; and Clara Bloodgood as "Violet". These



To Alice and Jeanne from
Robert Loraine
March 17. 1913.

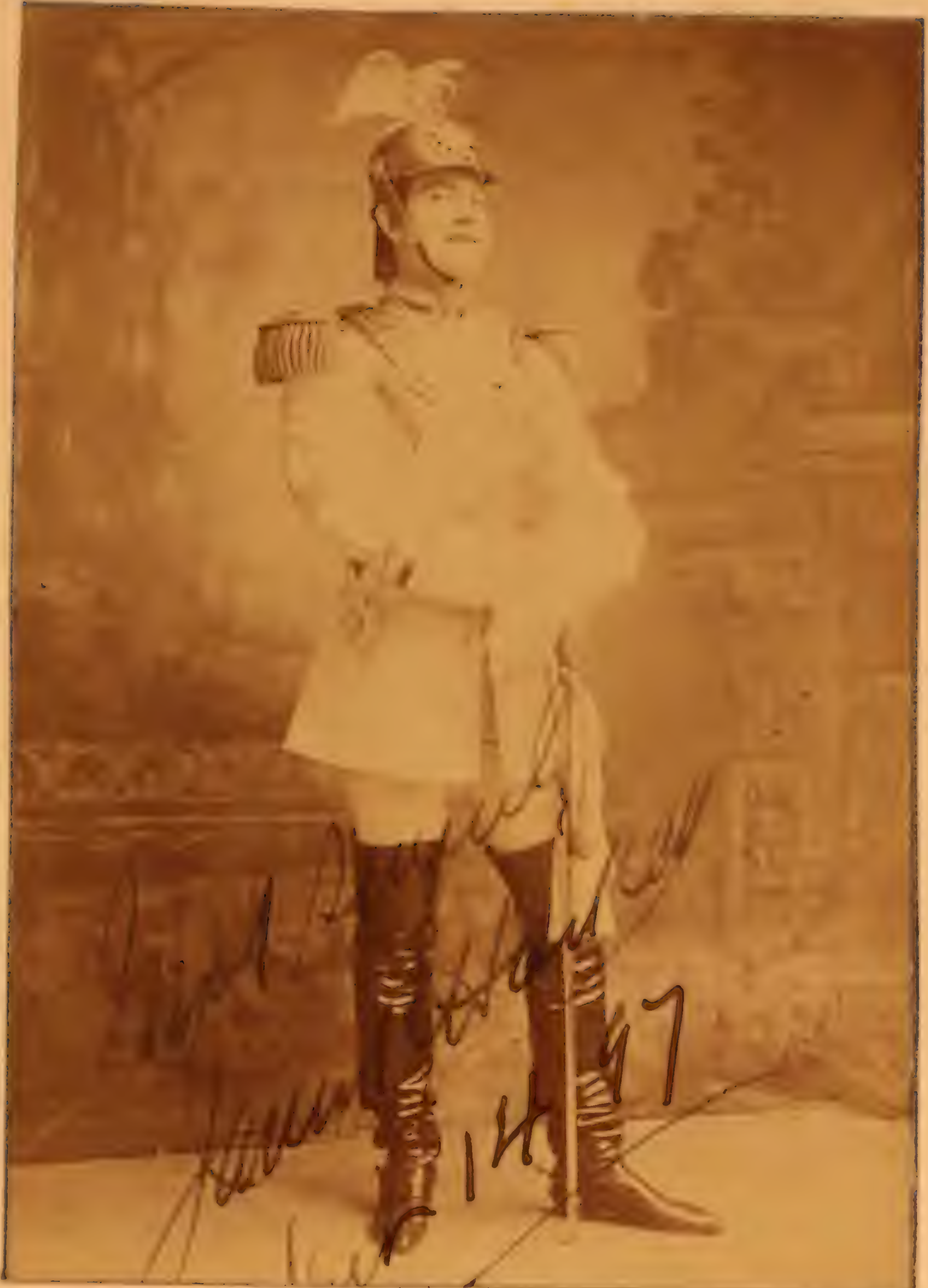
were the principal characters; but every part in the cast was well taken and the play was a tremendous success from the first. One Sunday evening some three months later Loraine and I sat before a dying fire in his little apartment in New York, where I had been his guset for dinner. We were talking over the success of his play, then just starting on its fourth month at the theatre where it was playing to packed houses every night. Loraine looked over at me:-

"This is my birthday, Alex," he said. "I'm thirty years old to-day." I murmured congratulations. " I've always promised myself - as I promised my Father on his deathbed, that I would 'make good' before I was thirty. Have I kept my word ?"

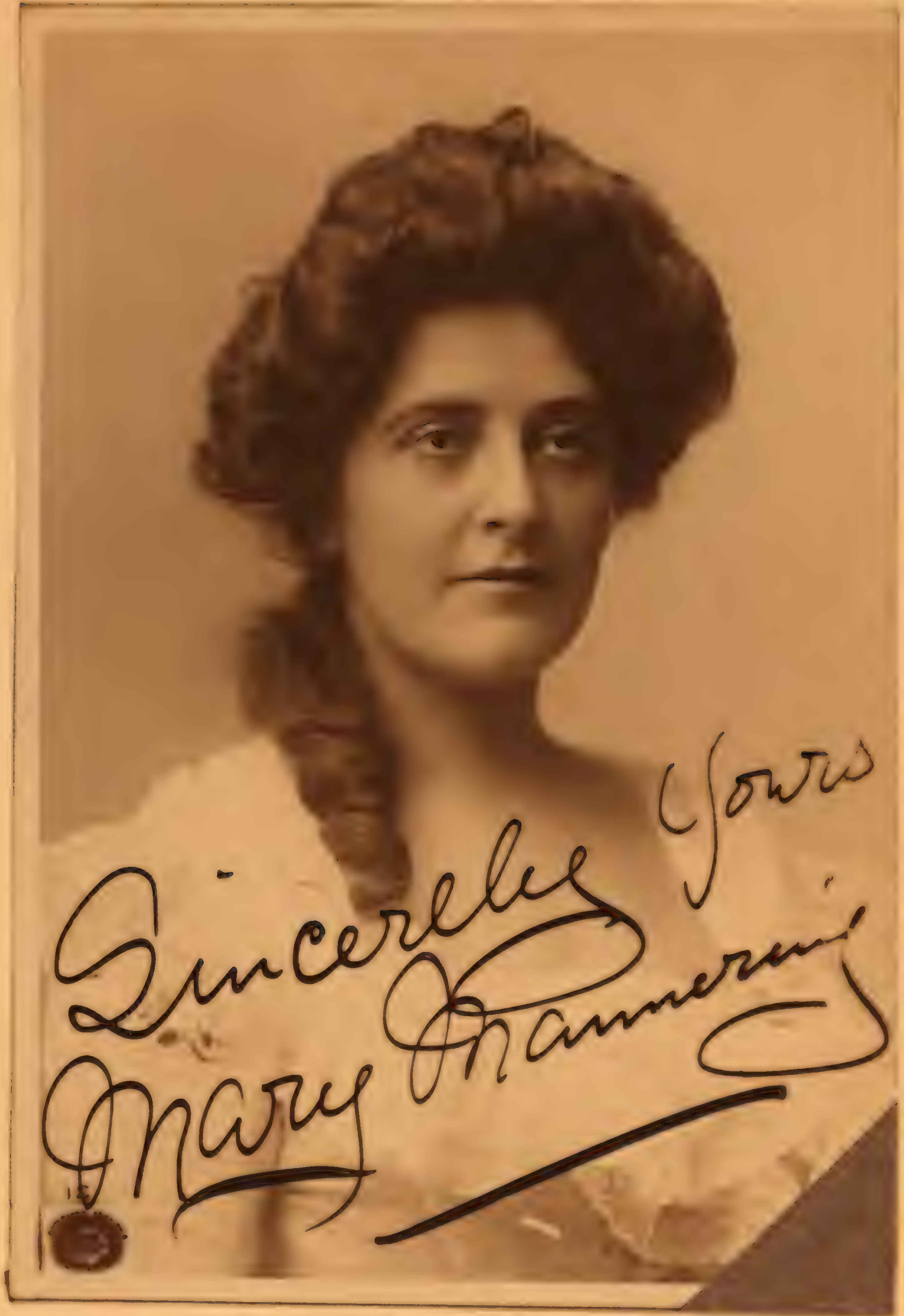
"Yes," I answered. "I think you have."

The play ran in America for two years and then Loraine returned to his native land, where my wife and I saw him in another play of Shaw's - "Getting Married" - in 1912. He visited America too, once or twice, and produced a successful revival of "Man and Superman", in Boston, in 1913; but the World War interrupted our relations and it was not until several years later that I came in from hunting one day to find a Marconigram on my desk telling me that Loraine was on his way to America; would land in New York in a few days; and wanted to see me. I wired back asking him to meet me at the Belmont Hotel when he landed, and I remember waiting for him that evening in the lobby. I had not seen him for six years, for we had missed each others on my previous visits to England. Presently he came, limping painfully, with the aid of a stick. Bu he had the same cheerful smile, and his voice was as strong as ever - the same old Robbie, if he was a bit battle-scarred. We dined together that night and went to a theatre, and then went back to his rooms at The Lotus Club, and he told me of his experiences in the War, which had just ended, and of his terrible fight on the day he had been wounded, and of his subsequent wonderful recovery. He was very modest, and it was not easy to make him talk; but gradually I got it all, and it was dawn before I said "Good-night" and went back to my hotel.

I saw him when he came to New York four or five years later, and again



Hackett in "The Prisoner of Zenda"



Sincerely Yours
Mary Mannering

Mary Mannering as "Janice Meredith"

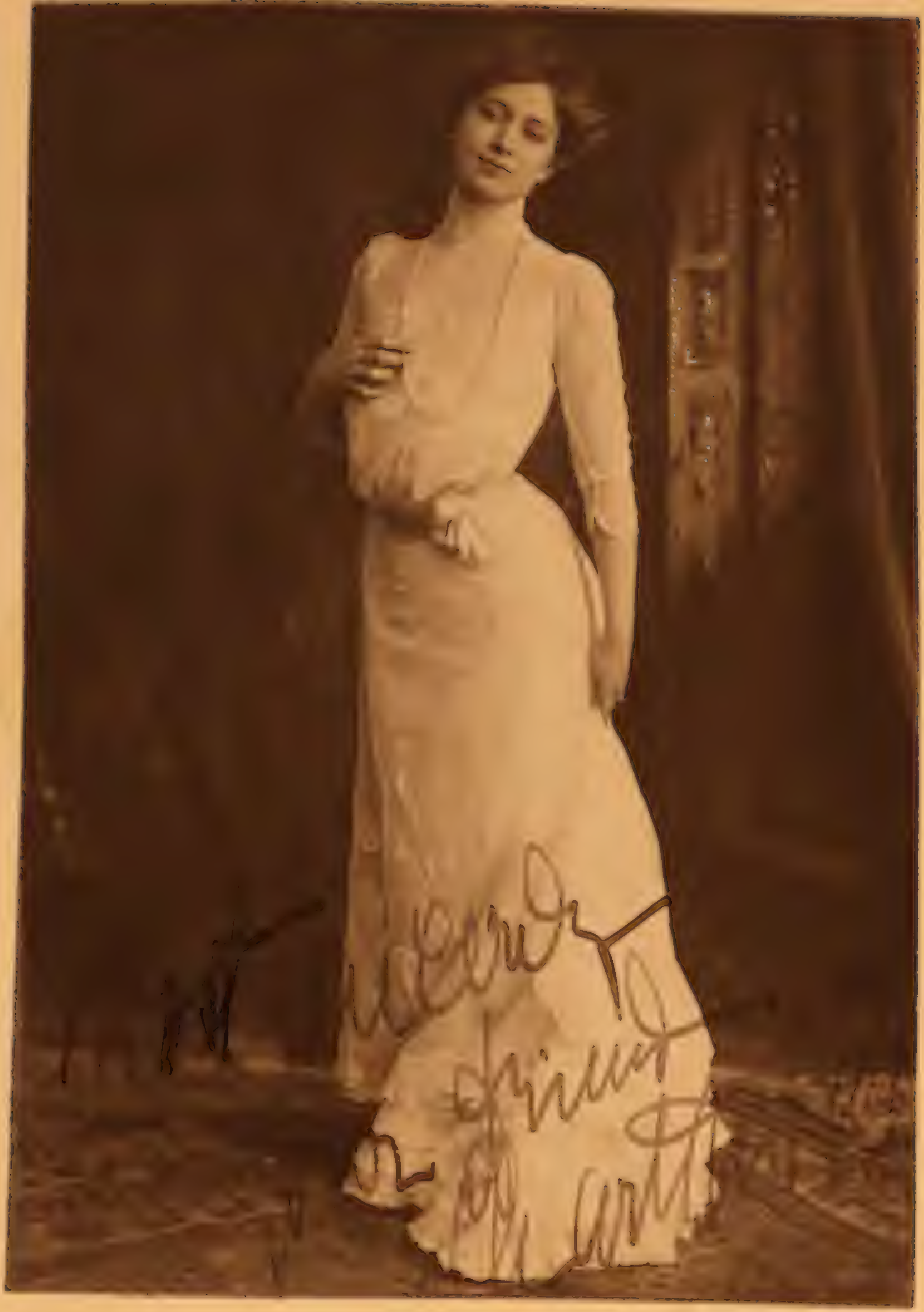
[illegible]

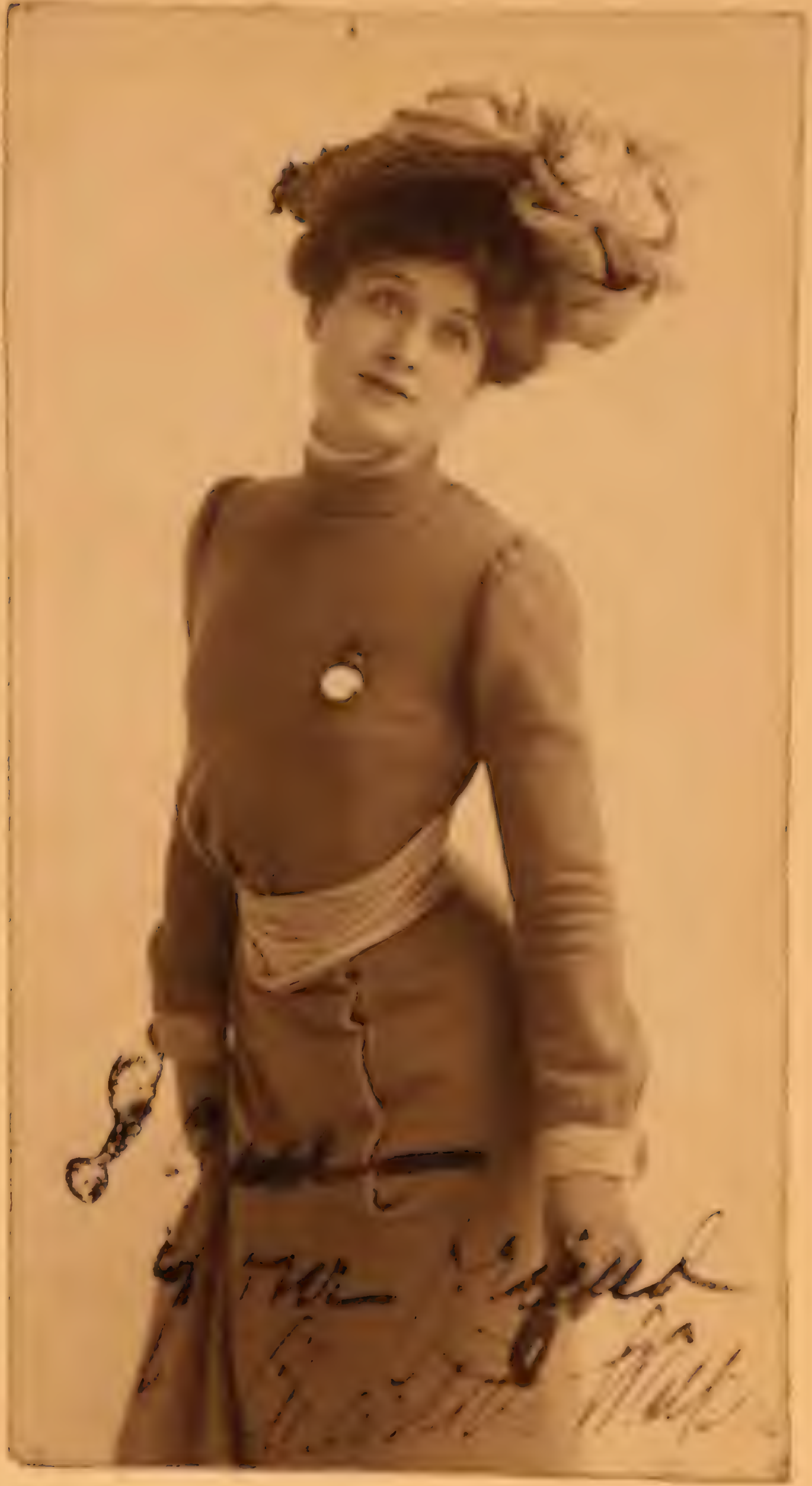
Sincerely

[illegible]

in England, when I first went there to live, when I met his charming wife, who afterwards told the story of his life so eloquently. In her book - "Robert Loraine - Actor, Soldier, Airman " - she has written of his struggles and of many incidents that happened during the years when I lost track of his activities; but to me he will always be that eager hopeful boy, who promised himself to succeed before he was thirty - and did so.

I think I have mentioned, among various plays which John Drew presented, the costume piece, "Richard Carvel", which had been adapted from Winston Churchill's novel of that name. For we had a Winston Churchill in America - a distant cousin of the great English statesman - who wrote some of the most successful historical novels which were brought out at that time. " Richard Carvel" could not truthfully be called a success, but "The Crisis", a dramatization of the Civil War novel by the same author, proved a very useful vehicle for James K.Hackett, who had graduated from his position as the leading man of Daniel Frohman's Lyceum Stock Company. The part of "Rudolf Rassendyll" in the original production of "The Prisoner of Zenda" had been played by Sothern; but a few years later, Daniel Frohman revived the play with the members of the Lyceum Stock Company in the cast; and of course the principal parts fell to Hackett and his wife, Mary Mannering, whose "Flavia" was, I think, the best impersonation of Anthony Hope's romantic heroine. Hackett and Miss Mannering were too valuable as individual stars to remain together, and after the production of "Rupert of Hentzau", in which I always wished that Sothern - and not Hackett - had played "Rasendyll", they had separated theatrically,- Mary Mannering heading the cast of Pinero's "Trelawney of The Wells" and Hackett appearing in "The Crisis." In a copy of the former play which I possess, I have the autographs of the original cast of "Trelawney" - among them Mrs Whiffen and her husband, Grant Stewart; William Courtleigh; Hilda Spong; Elizabeth Tyree; Edward Morgan; and Harry Woodruff. It was through the latter that I met Miss Mannering, whose "Rose Trelawny" must always rank as one of her most delightful characterizations. She and I happened to be travelling on the same train one day from New York to Providence, where she was





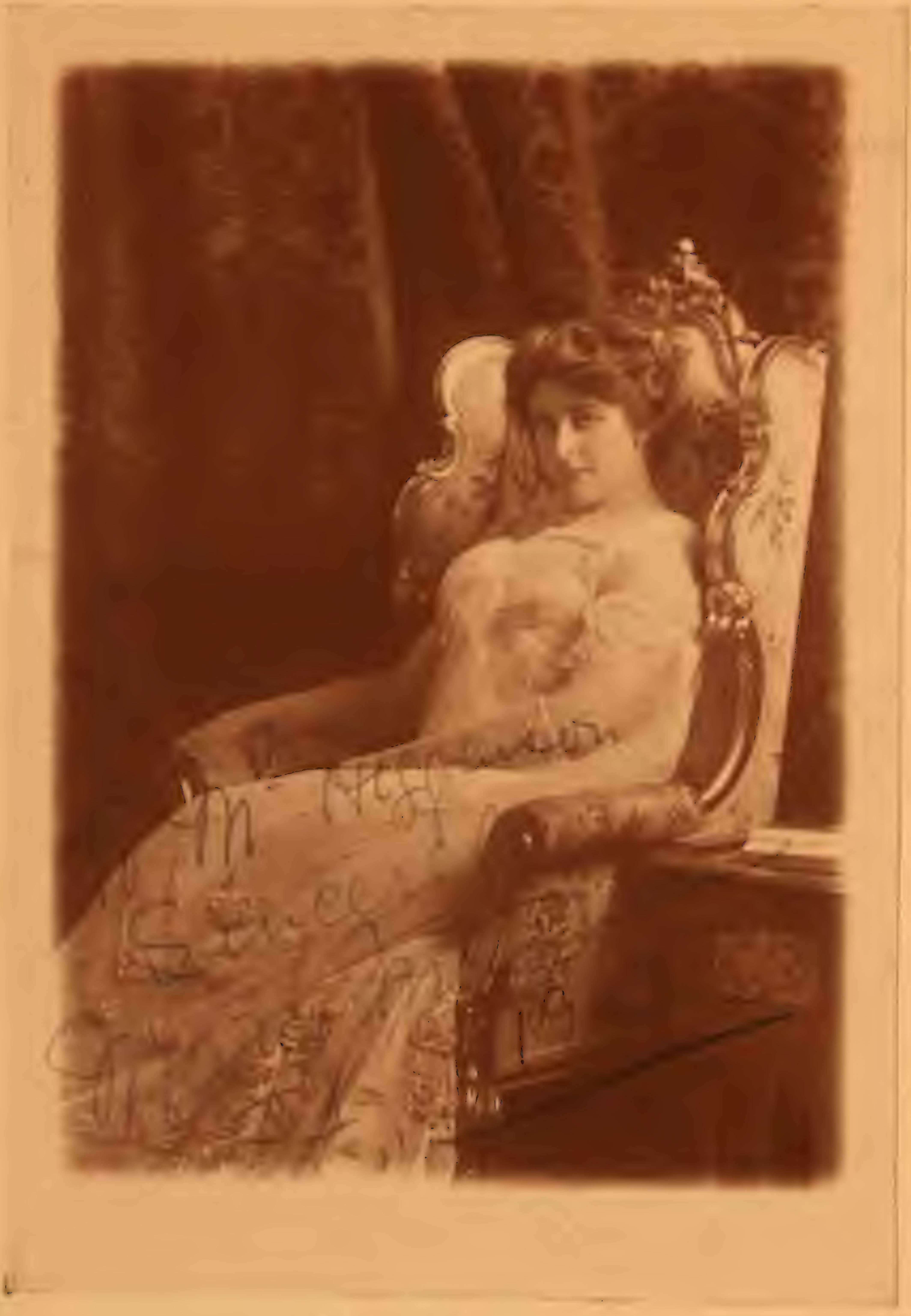
Charlotte Walker

[illegible]

playing; and she was kind enough to ask me to lunch at her house in New York on the following Sunday, and to go with her to a sort of Repetition General of "The Bishop's Move", in which my old friend William Thompson was making his first appearance as a star. I do not remember very much about the play, but I have a very delightful memory of that day, spent forty years ago, with Miss Mannering, and of the dinner which followed in her hospitable home. She suggested that I look up her husband, who was, at that time, playing in Boston, in "The Crisis". Accordingly, I sent my card back stage, and was received in a very formal and not at all cordial manner, by Mr. Hackett, with whom I never had the charming relations which have always continued with Miss Mannering. Hackett's leading lady at that time was Charlotte Walker, just then starting her theatrical career. Miss Walker - a Southerner by birth and of English extraction - had been on the stage only a short time, and had gone through a tragic experience during the Galveston flood a few years previous, in which she had been marooned on one of the islands on that ill-fated seacoast, and had escaped with her two children, after hardships which might well have wrecked her life. My acquaintance with her, begun at that time, covers a long period; for though we lost track of each other shortly after meeting, our friendship was renewed twenty years later, and to-day I reckon her among my most valued friends.

The stories in this book deal chiefly with my friendships with stage folk, and many of them have, of course, an intimate touch; but I feel that it is hardly fair to speak of that side of their lives which deals with their private affairs and of Miss Walker's I can only say that from all her troubles there has emerged a very sweet and lovely personality, which has endeared itself to everyone who knows her well.

Miss Mannering has left the stage; married happily; and lives in one of our Western cities. ~~Not so long~~ thirty years ago, I was dining one evening in New York with my son, and as we were going up to the Roof Garden of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, two la ladies stepped into the lift. The older of the two, whose mature beauty would have caused any man to look at her twice, smiled at me and said:- "You don't remember me,



Mary Mannering
1918

Mr Higginson. I am ------" "Mary Mannering," I said. "Yes," she answered, "and this is my daughter." "And this," I answered laughing, "is my son." We had our dinner together, and while the young people chatted happily, we talked of the old days and of the old plays which we both remembered - though we had been on different sides of the footlights - and of a supper party at which our host had been Robbie L Loraine, of whom I have already spoken.

Among the men in that first cast of "Trelawny of The Wells" was E.J. Morgan, who, in that play, took the part of the lovable "Tom Wrench". Morgan afterwards became well known on the American stage as leading man to Viola Allen, in Hall Caine's internationally known plays, "The Christian" and "The Eternal City"; and as co-star with Clara Bloodgood in a dramatisation of Booth Tarkington's novel, "The Gentleman From Indiana". In his early days, he gave promise of becoming one of America's greatest actors, and he was selected by Eleanora Duse's manager as the man best fitted to play the lead in many parts, with that great Italian actress. Unluckily for him - as well as for the American stage - Morgan took no care of himself physically, and though a very strong man, he died while still comparatively young. After "Tom Wrench", I think his best part was that of "Sydney Carton" in "The Tale of Two Cities", in which he followed Martin Harvey (now Sir Martin Harvey) whose name is perhaps most closely identified with Dickens's famous character.

Among the other men whom I met in The Lambs Club was Robert Edeson, whose name will always be coupled in my mind with that of the Indian "Strongheart", in the play of that name. Edeson was playing in Chicago, as leading man with Maude Adams, in Sir James Barrie's whimsical comedy, "The Little Minister", one Spring, as I was passing through the city. I had stopped off for twenty-four hours in order to see Ned Morgan, and he and Bill Courtleigh, whom I had known for years, and Bob Edeson and I had supper together after the theatre. I remember thinking him charming, and when "The Little Minister" was played at the Hollis Street Theatre in Boston, I looked him up and saw something of him during his stay in that city. A few years later, he came back in "Strongheart", a drama of Middle Western College

life, in which the problem of the marriage of an Indian chief to the sister of a white classmate is the theme on which the play is built. It was a good play and a must have been a great success financially, for Bob had an excellent company, and his leading lady, Mary Boland, played the part of the young collegian's sister with great feeling and delicacy. So successful was the play that it was taken to England, where, if one may believe old London theatre-goers, its success was instantaneous. Somehow, I lost track of Edeson during the years that followed, until we met in Chicago, in December of 1918 - and thereby hangs a tale which shall be unfolded in due course.

Dick Bennett was another well known American actor with whom I came in contact at The Lambs. I had first seen him in the company of that delightful comedienne, Annie Russell, and then with William Faversham, in H.V.Esmond's comedy, "Imprudence" - produced in England under the title of "Little Billy's Love Affair" - a play which had for me many far-reaching consequences; for it was in that cast that I first met the glamoureus "Lady Algy" - as I always used to call Miss Hilda Spong. Bennett was a clever comedian and rose rapidly in his chosen profession. I sometimes wish that he had stuck to comedy, but after his success as leading man to Maude Adams, in "What Every Woman Knows", he began to play more ambitious parts, and later never achieved the great successes which it was thought he would.

And now, I must go back a few years to one of the earliest plays which I remember - Henry Arthur Jones's drama, "The Masqueraders", of which I have already spoken. In the American production, the part of 'David Remon", played by George Alexander in England, was taken by Henry Miller; while that of"Sir Brice Skene", played in London by Herbert Waring, was acted in America by William Faversham. How well I remember the opening scene in the Assembly Rooms of the old Inn - and the hunting people in their gay scarlet evening coats ! I am afraid that my sympathies on that night were with the profligate "Sir Brice", rather than with the dreamer, " "Remon", who wins his love, only to give her up in the end, until that day when they meet "in that little star in Andromeda where all is real." That night saw the birth

"Fairy"

William Faversham 1903

of two stars - for Henry Miller and William Faversham were both to go on to fame.

I have mentioned Miller already, in connection with my account of his special performance of "The Taming of Helen", produced in the Town Hall at Marion, Massachusetts. That was a charming comedy, and Miller played many such - "Joseph Entangled"; "Daddy Longlegs"; and plays of similar character. He had a good part, too, in that drama of Western life, "The Great Divide", in which Margaret Anglin first appeared on her return from Australia. But I suppose that his name might be best remembered as that of an actor-manager and producer, a calling in which his son, Gilbert Miller, has succeeded and even surpassed him. In a way, it was rather an odd coincidence that in real life, Miller and Faversham should have played parts not unlike those portrayed in the personalities of "David Remon" and "Sir Brice Skene", in the drama in which they first appeared. Miller - like "David Remon",- was the more serious of the two men, and in the end the more successful; Faversham the more brilliant, the more attractive, the more volatile, but always possessing less stability than his contemporary; for, in spite of his many successes, he ended his days in p penury, in an Actors' Home on Staten Island. Poor old "Favvy"! What a sad ending it was, and how well it illustrates the truism that once out of the limelight, even the most successful actor is soon forgotten by the public which has worshipped and flattered him. But I think "Favvy" had a happy life. I did not know him in his early days, when "Sowing the Wind" and "The Conquerors" and "Brother Officers" were among his greatest successes; but when I first met him, he had just married that charming, gracious woman, Julie Opp, with whom he lived happily until her death, in 1923. During those years, the Favershams were often at Lincoln; for "Favvy" used to say that "Middlesex Meadows" was the only house which felt like "home" to him, outside of his own lovely summer bungalow on Long Island; and we were always glad to have them as our guests. In 1903, he was playing at the Hollis Street Theatre, in a play called "Sheridan", which proved a failure; and since his stay in Boston was booked for several weeks more, he decided to revive his old success, "Lord and Lady Algy". Just as the part of "Lord Algy" is remembered as being one of the great

Charles Harbury

To
Mr. A Henry Higginson
whose kindness I shall not
easily forget.
C Hanbury

2 January 1904.

successes of the late Charles Hawtrey in England, so it proved to be perhaps the outstanding one of Faversham's long career in America - for he never played in England, though he was born in that country. "Lord and Lady Algy" had been first presented in America in 1899, at which time, the part of "Lady Algy" had been played by that well known English actress, Jessie Millward; but on this occasion, my old friend, Hilda Spong, played the part and played it very well. At the time I was heart-whole and fancy-free, and truth to tell, I was fascinated by the fair Hilda - so fascinated that I persuaded "Favvy" to allow me to travel with the company, and even to play a small part during the run of the piece in Providence - my only venture on the professional stage, and I am afraid, not a very successful one. The remuneration which I received was, I believe, Two Dollars a performance, but I was a privileged member of the cast; wore the star's cast-off clothes in the fancy-dress ball of the second act, and supped with the star and his leading lady every night. We toured the New England "one night stands" after Providence, and it was rather good fun "barnstorming" with that pleasant company, in which were several of my friends - among them that veteran actor, Charles Harbury. Sometimes, we had supper in the restaurant of a hotel, but more often, in the New England "provinces", our late repasts were eaten in the "night lunch cars", where we often met very queer characters.

When my "engagement" with the company was over, I went on to Philadelphia, where they eventually closed their tour; and since "Lady Algy" decided to sail for England, I made up my mind to follow her a week later. I had not been in England since I was a small boy, and knew no one there, and nothing of the ways of the country. My Father gave me a lot of letters to his "quiet old friends" - some of whom turned out to be pretty gay - and "Favvy" one or two introductions to people in the theatrical world. But I was somewhat puzzled as to what hotel to stop at in London, until I had supper with that charming English actor, Charles Hawtrey, who happened to be playing in Boston the week before I left. He had supper with me, as a matter of fact, and suggested,-when I told him of my proposed visit to his home land - that I occupy his lodgings during my stay in London.

" I've got very cosy quarters in the Savoy Mansions," he told me, "an excellent cook, and good quarters for you and your man. You've been very hospitable to me during my stay in Boston, and I should be delighted if I could feel that I was making you some slight return for the hospitality you have shown me." I demurred - but he insisted, and said that he would telegraph his agent to meet me at Plymouth. There was nothing for me to do but accept - which I did with much gratitude.

I sailed on the "St Paul", on the 4th of February - if I remember rightly- and on that ship I found an old acquaintance of mine, an English actor named William Abingdon. Billy asked me where I was going to stop in London, and when I told him that my destination was Charlie Hawtrey's lodgings in Savoy Mansions, he began to laugh. Somewhat nettled, I asked the reason for his hilarity, and I confess that I was a good deal taken back when he told me that, though Hawtrey had formerly occupied the aforesaid apartment, he had sublet it during his visit to America, to another member of the profession.

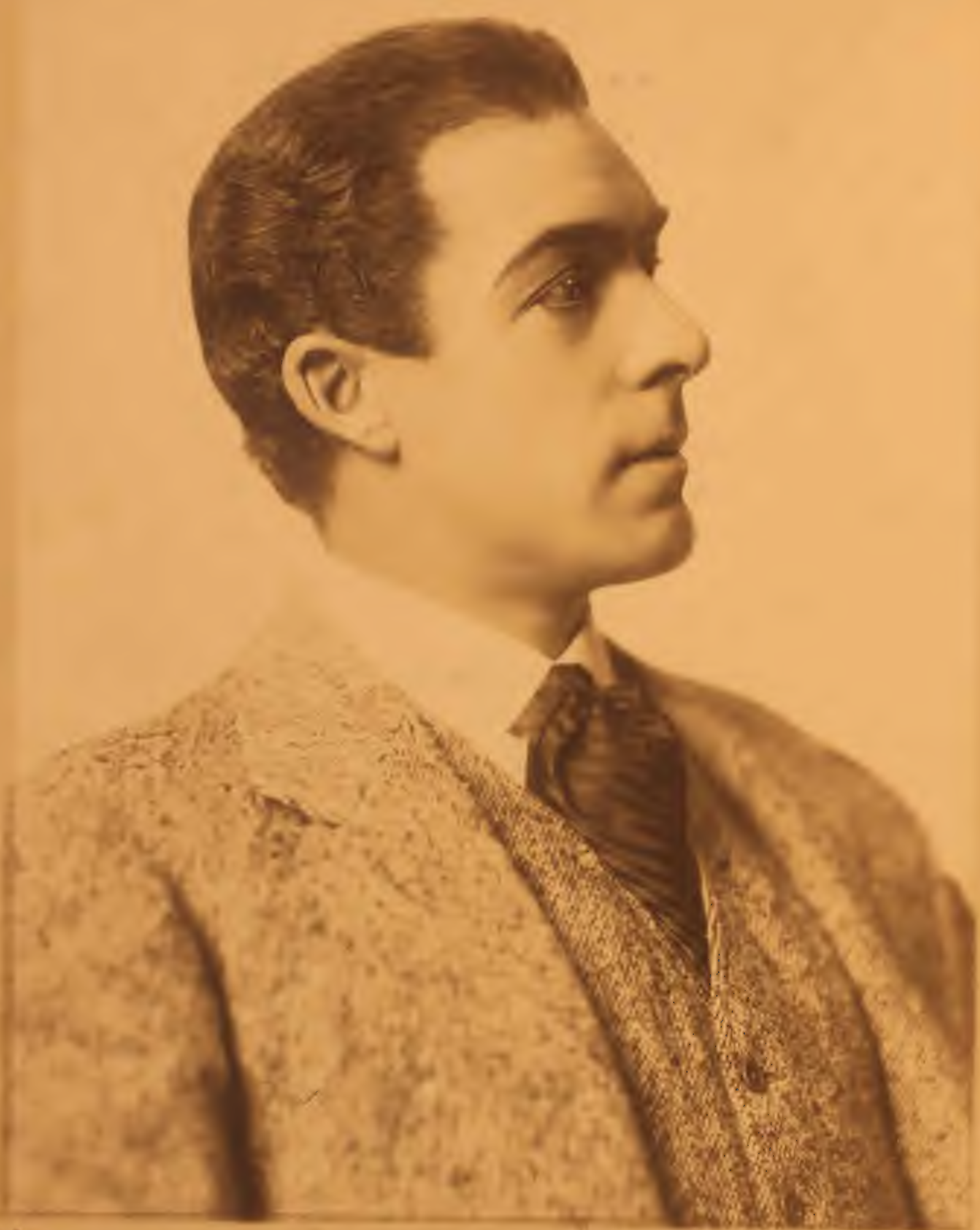
"You had better cable to the Carlton for rooms," he said, "otherwise, you may have to pass the night on the Embankment."

I did not know what "the Embankment" was in those days, but I followed his advice, and it was lucky for me that I did so; for everything turned out just as he had said, and I found Hawtrey's apartment occupied by Mr Paul Arthur. There is a sequel to this story, which I suppose I had better tell - though I have often told it before. On my return to America some three months later, I went one day to the Grillroom of the Touraine Hotel in Boston for my luncheon. Almost the first person I saw as I entered was Charlie Hawtrey, sitting at a table with his leading lady, Mona Harrison. He half rose as I came up, and holding out his hand, said:-

" Hello, Hig,- back again ? Have a good time in England ?"

" Yes," I answered smiling, "I had a delightful time in London and found those rooms of yours charming.' Not the least perturbed, Hawtrey smiled and said:-

" Yes, my agent said he met you and told me that he had seen you safely settled and thought you were comfortable. They *are* nice rooms, aren't they ? That



To Mrs & Mr "Alex" from
William Faversham Jan 1912

To [illegible] "Alex" from [illegible]

William [illegible] [illegible] 1911

view over the Embankment is lovely!" And so that incident was closed; for, though we often met in after years, neither of us ever again referred to the matter. A wonderfully charming man, Hawtrey - and a wonderful weaver of romances!

But to get back to my London visit. Miss Spong was stopping with her Father and Mother at Hampstead, and since she was free and on a vacation, we spent much time together and she showed me some of the sights of London, which I had not seen since my first visit there, when I was a boy. We also saw a good many plays. Before I left New York, Faversham had asked me to see the new plays, with a view to his own wants for the coming season. The London successes that Spring were many; but "The Duke of Killicrankie" - which was afterwards played in America by John Drew - and "Joseph Entangled", were outstanding: and we lost no time in seeing them both. "Joseph Entangled" was playing at the Haymarket Theatre, with Ellis Jeffreys and Cyril Maude in the cast, and I remember writing to "Favvy" that he had better secure the rights of that clever comedy if possible. The leading man's part, which was brilliantly played by Cyril Maude, would have fitted him like a glove, and Hilda frankly admitted that she would like to be in the cast. As a matter of fact, she did play in the American production, in support of Henry Miller, the following season. I did not meet Mr Maude at that time and I little dreamed that, one day, I should sit in that same theatre and watch my wife open in a new play. We saw several other plays which I have forgotten: but I think that the evenings which enjoyed most were the ones I spent at the house of Miss Ellis Jeffreys, who, with her husband - Herbert Sleath - was living on Seymour Street, Portman Square. "Favvy" had given me a letter to Herbert Sleath; and he and his wife were most kind and hospitable to the stranger from overseas, who was somewhat lost in London. I had a pleasant evening, too, at the Savage Club, where my membership at The Lambs of New York gave me reciprocal privileges. Mr Spong took me there, to one of their Sunday night dinners, where he contrived to have me seated next to Bertram - the King's Juggler - who was a most amusing man to meet; and who, if he was in a good mood - as he happened to be that night - played all manner of mystifying tricks.

Julie

Julia Opp

I have spoken of [illegible] success in "[illegible]". [illegible] it so happened that [illegible] In [illegible], "[illegible]" was looking about for a play. [illegible] suggested "[illegible]", and [illegible] - I can't remember who he was - [illegible] It so happened that Maxine Elliott - who had not been seen on the stage for several years - was in London at a time, and "[illegible]" persuaded her to accept the part of "[illegible]." The play opened at the [illegible] Theatre in New York, and I have only vivid recollections of that first night.

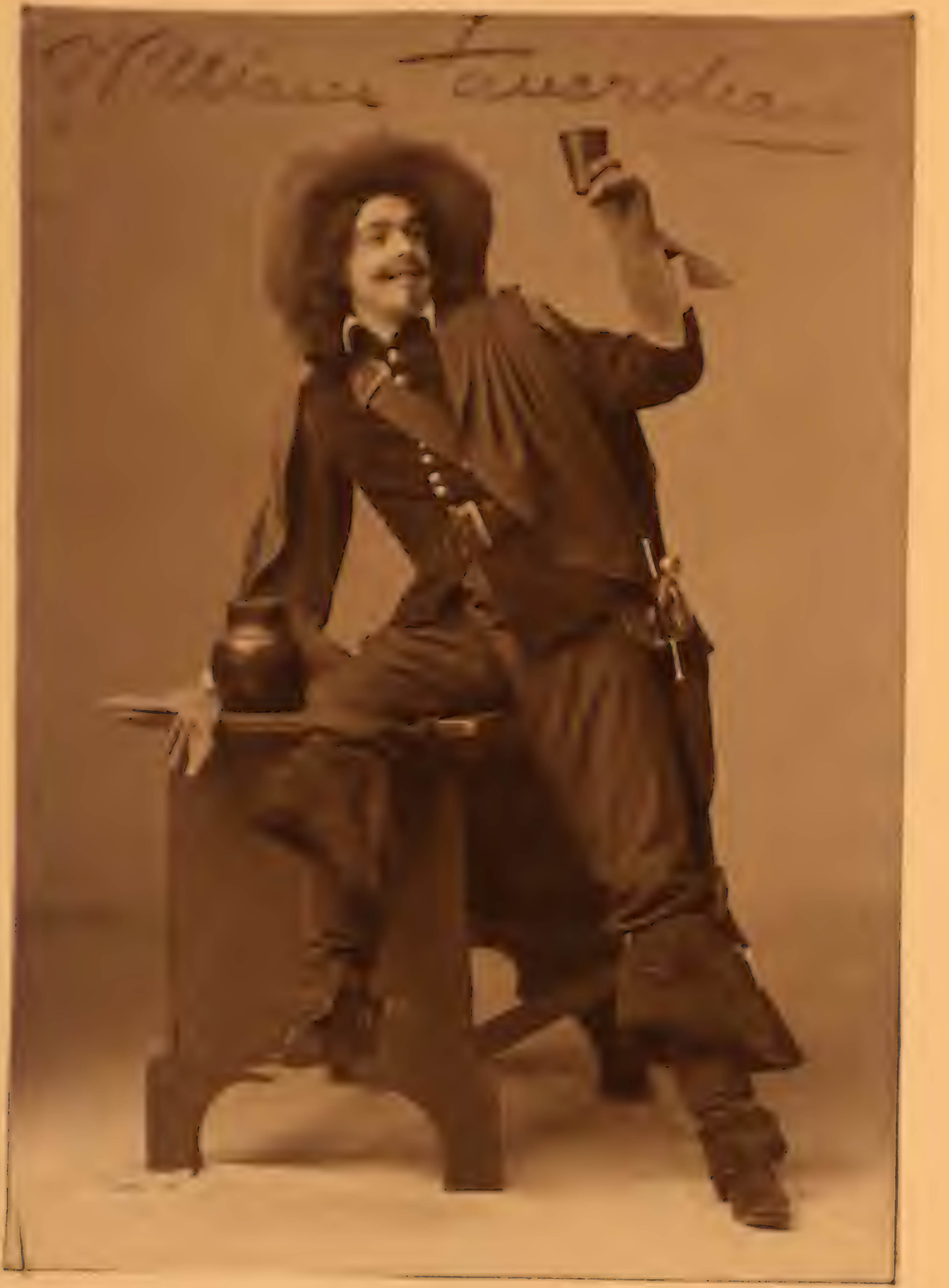
[illegible]'s entrance was greeted with a round of applause, but it was the first appearance of his co-star that was the sensation of the evening. I have always maintained that Maxine Elliott was the most beautiful woman that I have ever seen - and, I think, the most gracious. When she made her first appearance that night there was a sort of gasp which went up from the audience that was the greatest tribute she ever could have had. The [illegible] her [illegible] and her beauty was breath-taking. It was just the sort of part that suited her - and she played it as to the manner born. It was timed perfectly, both she and "[illegible]" were [illegible] well, and [illegible] he had acknowledged the applause in a little speech, the audience [illegible] in their seats and refused to leave the theatre until [illegible] said a few words to [illegible] the lovely actress [illegible].

Some months later, the play opened at the Majestic Theatre in [illegible], and at the end of the first act, Miss Elliott and the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

I have spoken of Faversham's success in "Lord and Lady Algy". He had many others; but it so happened that the three times he starred in R.C.Carton's brilliant comedy are identified with him in my mind. In 1917, "Favvy" was looking about for a play. His initial play that Autumn had been a failure and he needed a "sure fire" success. Someone suggested "Lord and Lady Algy", and his astute manager, - I can't remember who he was - decided that, with an all star cast, a revival of the play would be a sound investment. It so happened that Maxine Elliott - who had not been seen on the stage for several years - was in America on a visit, and "Favvy" persuaded her to accept the part of "Lady Algy." The play opened at the Broadhurst Theatre in New York, and I have very vivid recollections of that first night.

Faversham's entrance was greeted with a round of applause, but it was the first appearance of his co-star that was the sensation of the evening. I have always maintained that Maxine Elliott was the most beautiful woman whom I have ever seen - and, I think, the most gracious. When she made her first appearance that night there was a sort of gasp which went up from the audience that was the greatest tribute she could have had. She looked her best and her beauty was breath-taking. It was just the sort of part that suited her - and she played it as if to the manner born. At the final curtain, both she and "Favvy" were forced to take call after call, and even when he had acknowledged the applause in a little speech, the audience remained in their seats and refused to leave the theatre until Maxine said a few words to thank them for their welcome home to her.

Some months later, the play opened at the Majestic Theatre in Boston, and at the end of the first week, Miss Elliott and the Favershams spent the week-end with us at Lincoln. Mrs Faversham (Julie Opp) had no part in the play, but she was with the company, which was a sort of happy family. Charlie Cherry, too, was playing in Boston at that time and he joined our little coterie at "Middlesex Meadows". On the second Sunday of the visit we all went to Camp Devens - one of the new cantonments which the United States Army had just established for the training of the Forces which were soon to go overseas in the first World Great War. It so happened that my



Faversham
in
"Under the Red Robe"

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

brother-in-law, Tom Guilfoil, had asked me to organise some sort of a theatrical entertainment for the troops, and had selected the Sunday of which I speak as the most suitable day. There were a good many stars playing in Boston at that time - Willie Collier; Donald Brian ; Raymond Hitchcock; and Irene Bordoni - as well as the stars of "Lord and Lady Algy"; and I persuaded Julia Opp to help me in enlisting their services for our entertainment. What a "variety" cast that was ! Many a New York manager would have paid untold sums to have been able to produce them all in one performance. They were very good about coming, particularly the members of Raymond Hitchcock's company - he had many clever people in the cast of "Hitchy Koo"- and they all came out from Boston on the one o'clock train and met us at Ayer Junction some fifteen miles up the line from Lincoln, where we had gone by motor. We all drove to Camp Devens together, where we were met by Major Barlow - himself a professional actor and a member of The Lambs - who acted as Entertainment Officer for the Division. The performance was given in a huge hall - which was, I believe, controlled by the Y.M.C.A.- and I should think that there must have been well over 1500 men seated when the curtain finally went up. My Father, who was a Civil War veteran, said a few words of introduction and then the show began. I wish there had been a programme, for I should like to have had some memento of that occasion, but there was none, and I can only remember that each one of the stars did his or her bit, in turn, and that they were all greeted with prolonged applause. We kept our best card for the last, and when Irene Bordoni - that charming French *diseuse* who was such a success in New York that season - came on and sang some of her inimitable French songs, she was tremendously applauded. But she too kept her best for the last. She was dressed in a little khaki-coloured suit, and stepping up to a dignified General Officer who happened to be standing in the wings, she said:- "Mon General, give me your 'at," and putting it jauntily on her head, she stepped to the front of the stage and gave a signal to the leader of the orchestra (Hitchcock had sent out his entire orchestra from Boston) and broke into the well known strains of "Over There", which she sang in French. If there had been applause before, there

To Kate [illegible] [illegible]

I. with best wishes

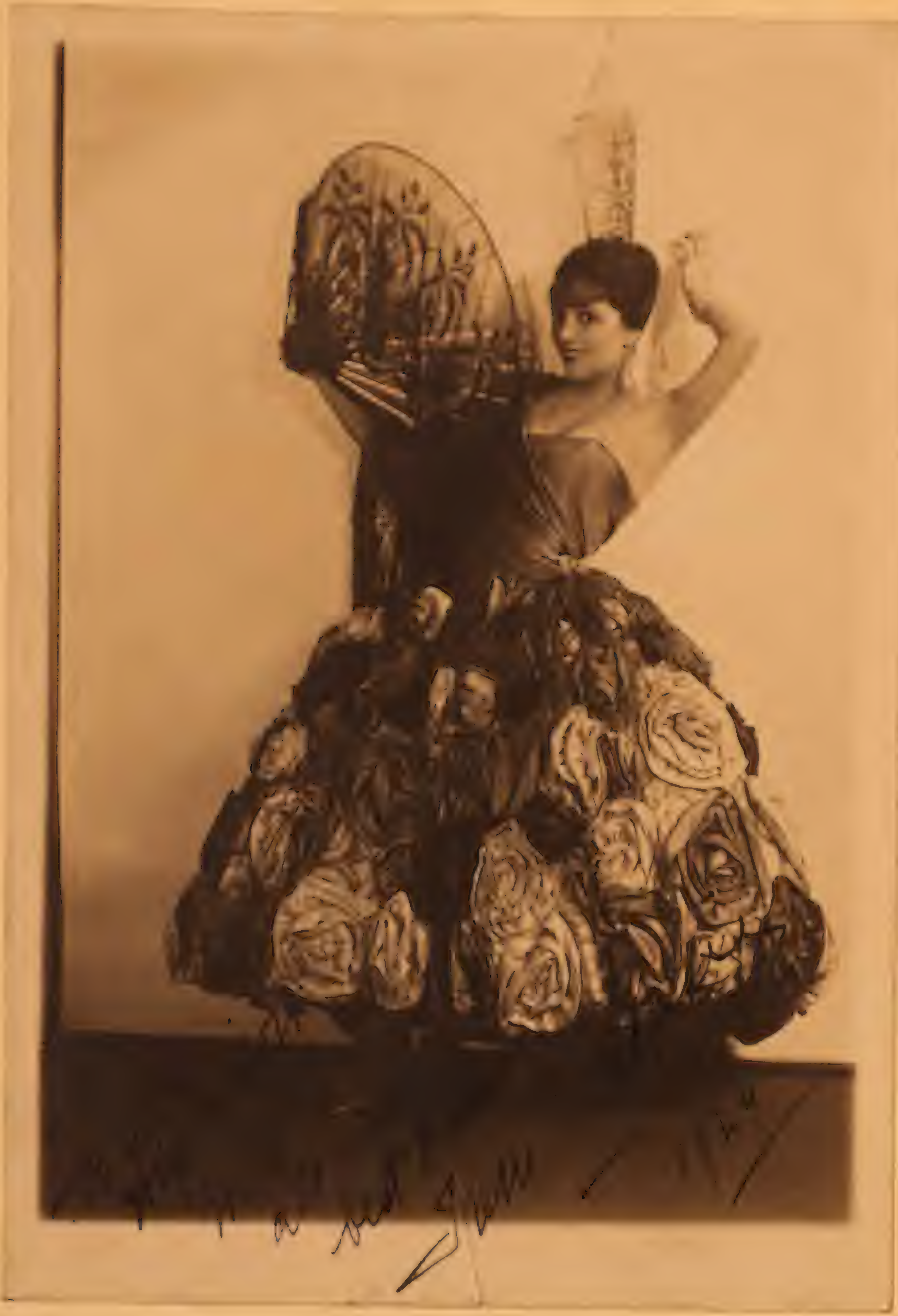
from Lina [illegible]

pandemonium then. Men stood up and cheered till the sound must have carried all over the Camp, and it was not until she came forward again and held up her hand that the cheering stopped.

"Now you sing it for me", she said - the cheering broke out again - and taking the baton from the orchestra leader, she signalled to the orchestra and led that great chorus in the song which at that time was becoming famous the world over. What an afternoon that was !

After the performance was over, we were given Tea by the Commanding General, and then most of the stars came back to dine with us at Lincoln. We had warned our household that there would probably be guests for dinner, but I don't think that even "the faithfull John" - as my old friends used to call my butler, who was with us for many years ~~has now been with me for~~ forty years - was prepared for so many. But he rose to the occasion and we had a grand dinner party in the big Hall, and then afterwards the fun began. Someone - I think it was Faversham - asked Bordoni to sing for us, and with her fiancé, Ray Goetz, the producer, to play her accompaniments, she kept us all fascinated while she sang song after song - French, Spanish and English - in her own inimitable way. Bordoni did not have a great voice but it was a very charming one, and she made the most of it; and songs which, sung by anyone else were merely commonplace, became "hits" when sung by her. There were others that night who added to the joy of the party - Macklyn Arbuckle, whose caricature drawn by himself is in my Guest Book to-day; Donald Brian, the original "Prince Danilo" in the American production of "The Merry Widow"; Alfred Newman, whose piano playing charmed my Father; dear old "Hitchy", in whose company my wife had played at one time. It was late when that party broke up, and we were all very tired, but it was one of those happy evenings which one never forgets.

Our friendship with Bordoni, begun that night, continued for many years. We always saw her when she came to Boston, and often, in New York, she and her husband would dine with us or we would have supper with them after the theatre. She was one of the kindest people I have ever known, and I shall never forget the pleasure



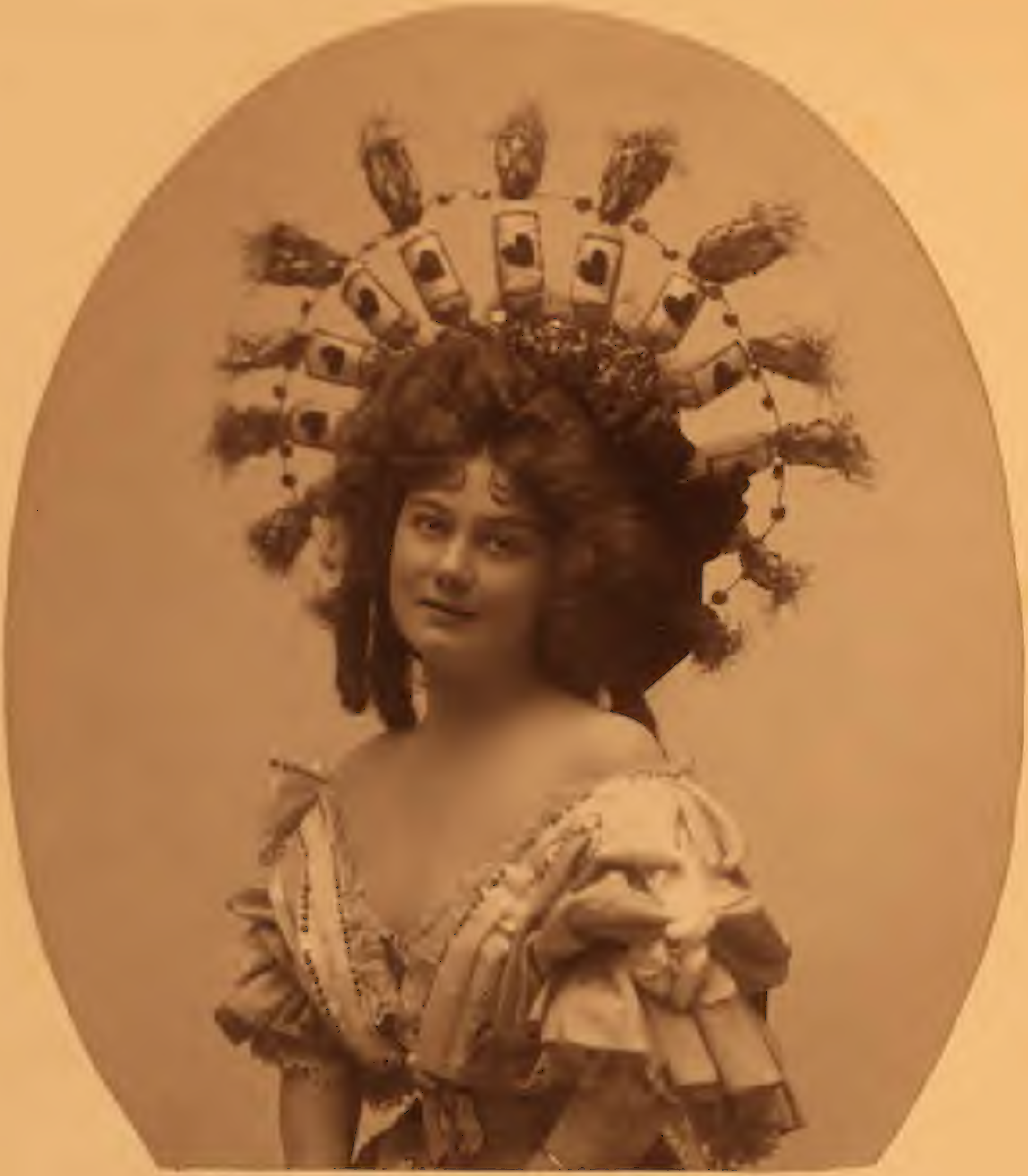
Bordoni

Dodo

she gave my wife during the last month of the latter's last illness. Jeanne was too ill to go in Town to the theatre where Bordoni was playing, and I went alone to her opening night, and went back stage afterwards to see her and to extend an invitation to come to us over the week-end. Bordoni asked me why my wife had not come with me, and on my telling her that she was not well enough to come in Town, but that she had sent her greetings by me, said:-

"If she cannot come to the theatre, I will bring my songs to her - you will see." More she did not say at the time, but on the next Sunday afternoon, when she was at lunch, she said to the invalid:- "This afternoon, about Teatime, if you will come downstairs and lie on the chaise longue before the fire, I have a surprise for you. You could not come to my play, so I bring my play to you." And so, at four o'clock, with her accompanist who had come out from Boston in an automobile, she sang all her songs for that pathetic sufferer, of whom she was so fond.

Unlike some College boys, I was not a great frequenter of musical comedy in my early days. Rather did I turn for my theatrical friendships to those stars who shone on the Legitimate satge. There were, however, exceptions; and one of those was Lotta Faust - in private life the wife of my very good friend, "Richie" Ling. I do not suppose that anyone who saw the original production of 'The Wizard of Oz", in America, will ever forget Lotta Faust in that extravaganza, which first brought Fred Stone and his partner, Montgomery, into the limelight of musical comedy. Lotta had a small part, but she had one song, which was the hit of the piece and which made her famous the world over. I don't know who wrote the words or the music of "Sammy", but I do know that, when Lotta singled out any man in the audience and sang it to him, that man, though he may have been embarrassed, felt that he, and he alone, had won her heart. She usually sang to any man who happened to be sitting in the right-hand proscenium box, which, at the Boston Theatre, where the extravaganza was presented, was in great demand by the undergraduates of Harvard University; and being a somewhat susceptible young man, I managed to secure it on one or two occasions. In the beginning, I did not know that Miss Faust was in reality Mrs Ling, but as soon



Lotta Faust

as I found it out, I wrote to Dick in New York and asked him if I might take her out to supper, which, of course, he was glad to have me do. Presently he came to Boston and he and Lotta found their way to "Middlesex Meadows" for a week-end - as my theatrical friends usually did. Acquaintance ripened into friendship, and for many years - until Lotta's death in fact - I saw them often either in New York or Boston. After Lotta's death, Ling, who had a beautiful tenor voice, and who at one time was leading man for Fritzi Scheff, that Austrian singer who forsook the operatic stage for musical comedy,, returned to the legitimate drama, appearing in many successful modern plays, of recent years. I have not been to The Lambs Club, where, as I have said, I am still a member, for half a dozen years; and I have not heard from Dick Ling in that time. Someone told me that he has crossed the Great Divide;-somehow I cannot picture going to The Lambs without his cheery greeting;-but if this is true, I feel sure that he is singing in the Celestial Chorus, with the lovely Lotta beside him!

Not long after my return from England, I went one night to another musical comedy which was presented at the Boston Theatre, which, be it understood, was one of the largest houses in the United States. "Fantana" will go down in theatrical history as having some rather famous people in the cast: for Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. played the leading juvenile role, and Julia Sanderson - afterwards one of America's most successful musical comedy stars - supported Jefferson d'Angelis, then at the height of his career. To me the piece will always have a tender significance for it was in the chorus of that popular song hit, "Tammany", that I first saw Jeanne Calducci, who afterwards became my wife. She had a small part in the piece, and with her running mate, Catherine Cooper, had a song and dance whose melody will never leave my head. Jeanne's theatrical career was only a small part of her life, for she left the theatre and married me within a year. Since this book is in no sense an autobiography, but rather a somewhat fragmentary account of friendships with people of the stage, her story has no place here, beyond that of hostess to many of those who came to the house over which she presided so graciously until her death in 1928.

Cléo de Mérode

But it is not true of another member of that gay cast. Julia Sanderson had replaced Adele Ritchie in the lead, when "Fantana" came to Boston. It was the period of long skirts and big hats and puffed sleeves, and I well remember seeing Miss Sanderson pass through the hall of the Adams House, which adjoined the theatre, on her way to supper, after the curtain had gone down. I did not know her at the time, but I shall always have a vivid recollection of her, in that long skirt and big picture hat - a relic of the "naughty nineties",- as she swept along the hall that night, the cynosure of the eyes of the many Harvard undergraduates who were waiting for their friends in the chorus. Some months after that, she appeared in the lead of "The Tourists", which played at the Majestic Theatre all summer, and I used to see her often at the Rockingham Park Race Track, at Salem, New Hampshire, which was only half an hour away from Boston by train. After that, she vanished from America for a few years and made a name for herself in London, where the Britishers loved her as much as we did at home. Presently, she came back and played in "The Sunshine Girl", "The Arcadians", and many others; but particularly do I remember her in "The Girl From Utah", about 1914; and her singing of that haunting little melody by Jerome Kerne - "They Wouldn't Believe Me". A friend of mine - who shall be nameless - was very much in love with her in those days,- who wasn't, for that matter? - and he used to come to stay with me in Boston and go to the Colonial Theatre, where she was playing; sitting in the front row night after night, gazing up at her. Like a bit of Dresden china she was - so dainty and delicate that she looked as if a breath might break the whole masterpiece. Her voice was like a silver bell - not a great voice, but one which, perfectly controlled, was used to the very best advantage. I did not know her in those days, but a few years later, we met one night at supper, at the Copley-Plaza Hotel, and I found her quite as charming as she had seemed across the footlights. She was playing at the Colonial Theatre, in a musical comedy called "Rambler Rose", and I was sitting with my wife, who, of course, had been in the company with her, in "Fantana". We were in the front row, and as she came on for the first time, she looked down; caught Jeanne's eye; smiled and murmured under her breath;- "Hello, Jeanne." Later that

Julia and Frank Crumit

[illegible]

evening, as I have said, she came out to supper with us; and after that our friendship matured rapidly and we used to see her whenever her engagements brought her to Boston.

Many years later, she was starring in "Tangerine", in New York, and I went back, after the final curtain, to pay my respects; and as I sat there, in her little Dressing-room chatting, she asked me how I liked her new leading man. I had already noticed him; thought him attractive; and said so. "I'd like you to meet him", she said, "he's such a nice chap," and turning to her maid, said:-"Nellie, go up and ask Mr Crumit to come down for a moment." Presently, he came down, and that was my first introduction to Frank Crumit, to whom Julia is happily married.

A more perfect match it would be difficult to imagine, and one has only to see them at home, to realise that marriages on the stage sometimes do succeed! A few years ago, I spent a week-end with them, at their delightful little house in Longmeadow, Massachusetts - "Dunrovin" they call it aptly - though, even in those days, when they have both retired from the stage, they spend a goodly portion of each week in New York, where their broadcasting work takes them. I shall never forget that week-end. After dinner, Frank Crumit picked up his ukelele and began to hum one of the old songs - "Sweet Lady", I think it was - his own composition, from "Tangerine" and Julia joined in. Then the fun began, and I sat there entranced, while they sang song after song - new songs, old songs, songs that I had almost forgotten, written in the early'90s, when I was at school, and Frank and Julia were not even born - "Annie Rooney", "Daisy Belle" (with her bicycle built for two), "Comrades", and so on, to the songs out of Julia's early successes,- "It's Nice to Have a Sweetheart", "Some Sort of Boy", etc.etc., until I thought they had run the whole gamut of musical comedy. But, no - back they went to an earlier date, and sang snatches from "Pinafore" and the old Gilbert and Sullivan successes of other days. What an evening!

How long ago that seems! I had not heard those old songs sung by these same dear people for many years - until one night during the summer of 1941. Early in August, I had received a letter from Frank, in which he said:- "Julia and I are going to broadcast to England on Thursday night, August 28th, and we are going to sing

some of the old songs, for you and Mary. I think, with any luck, you should be able to hear us well on the 19-meter wave-length." As luck would have it, my wife was away; but, though I had a dinner engagement I cancelled it, and Thursday night found me alone in my Library, waiting for that broadcast. Luckily, the reception was good, and presently I heard Frank's familiar voice singing one of his own compositions. When he had finished, he said:-

"And now we are going to sing some of our old songs, for two very dear friends of ours who are living in Dorset, England,- Alex Higginson and his wife, Mary - better know perhaps in America as "Mary Newcomb" - who is doing such good work in playing to the Forces in England. Are you listening, Alex?" I could almost see him turn to his wife, for I did hear him say:- "Now, Julia, sing Alex one of the songs you used to sing in the days when he sat in the front row." And then came Julia's voice:- "Hello, Alex; are you listening? You will remember this one." And she sang the song of all others that I remember her by - "They Wouldn't Believe Me", And as I sat and listened, all the old days came back to me, and I confess that I was more moved than I had been for many a month. After she had finished, they sang some songs together, and then,-alas, how quickly those minutes flew by - they said "Good-night."

Some day, when the War is over, I hope again to sail into New York harbour, and one of the first things I shall do will be to call up Julia Sanderson on the telephone and say:- "Well, how's the prettiest girl in New York?" And she will answer,- "Hello, bad penny - turned up again ?" And the old contact will be re-established.

One man, of all my theatrical friends, stands out in my memory, as a man who, by nature, was totally unfitted to become an actor; and yet was, by force of circumstances, so placed that it became the natural thing for him to do. Charles Cherry was, first and foremost, a "man-about-town" in the best sense of the word. His people were not theatrical people, and I have often wondered how it happened that he took up the stage as a means of livelihood. When I first knew him, he was leading man for Maxine Elliott, and it was through some old friends of his that I met him.

to Mr Higgins
Mr Higgins
SILBERER, N.Y.

I used to know a good many men - and a few women - who were on the stage in the days of my bachelorhood, and Charlie was among them. He came to supper with me one night, at the old University Club, on Beacon Street, in Boston, and I can see him now - slight, good-looking, every inch a man of the world,-as he came in from the wintry East wind atmosphere of a typical raw New England night. We had supper together and talked - not about the theatre, but about sport - and I was charmed by him and asked him to spend a week-end with me in the country. When he ended that visit, we had become fast friends, and it was a friendship that lasted until his death in 1931. We saw each other always, when he was in Boston, and on my occasional visits to New York, where I sometimes stayed with him, at his charming little flat on West 57th Street. He was, I think, one of the best leading men that we had in America, f from 1900 on; and the portrayal of various parts which were given to him with such st stars as Ethel Barrymore, Maxine Elliott, and Elsie Ferguson, were always played with that quiet charm which characterises the real gentleman on the stage; but which is so seldom seen to-day. As a star, too, he had many successes; particularly in "The Passers By" and "The Dover Road"; but the stage had few illusions and no lure for him, and presently he gave it up and went home to England. Here I saw a great deal of him again; he was a delightful companion at all times; and it was a severe blow to me and to my wife when news came of his sudden death. He had not been feeling well - we knew that - and had been in poor spirits; but he seemed to be brighter, and had much enjoyed going to the races, of which he was a regular follower. His sister told me afterwards that he had been one of a gay party at luncheon, and that they had all left for the races at half past one, stopping at his rooms to get his glasses, which he had forgotten. He went upstairs to his flat but did not come down promptly. Minutes went by and there was no sign of him; so one of the men of the party went up to see if anything was wrong, and found him lying, quite dead, on the floor.

Poor old Charlie! He was mourned by many friends on both sides of the water - on the stage and off - and in every walk of life; for he was kind to everyone and everyone loved him. Many a chorus girl, out of work, can thank him

for his help, and one or two, whose talent he readily perceived, owe their first chance to his influence. His devotion to his Mother, Lady Emily Cherry, was beautiful to see; and his constant thoughtfulness for other people was only one tr trait in a very lovely character. As an actor, he may have fallen short of the peak; as a gentleman and a friend he will always have a very warm place in the hearts of those who knew and loved him.

Always perfectly turned out, he was as well known on Bond Street and Piccadilly as he was on Fifth Avenue and Broadway - the beau ideal of a typical Englishman. It was always difficult to get him to talk about the stage - he had no love for his work - and it was probably this which kept him from going higher in the profession which he followed; but, get him on the subject of racing, and he would blossom out and talk for hours together. He was a great raconteur, a good friend, and a good son; and after all, that is saying a great deal.

Another well known figure on the American stage, and a man who, like Cherry, was fond of the race track, was Vincent Serrano, who in his younger days made a tremendous success as the Mexican vaquero, "Tony", in Augustus Thomas's drama of Western life, "Arizona". I never knew Serrano well, but he was often at Belmont Park in the days when I was acting as Steeplechase Steward there, and we used frequently to go home together in the "Race train" and go on to The Lambs for dinner. I think he must have inherited a bit of money, for he never seemed to care whether he had an engagement or not, and always seemed to be comfortably off. Fifteen years ago, he was playing in "Rio Rita", a musical comedy, in New York; but I shall always remember him as the gay Mexican vaquero, who sang Adios Amor, and finished his lover's declaration after the song with:- "And damn to Hell my soul, I love you!"

Augustus Thomas, the author of "Arizona", has told, in his autobiography, "The Print of My Remembrance", of his experiences in Arizona, where he spent some time, in order to get local colour for the play, which, when it was finished, he submitted to Charles Frohman, who decided against its production. The War with Spain was on at that time, and it was not until the trouble had subsided that

the author took the manuscript to that well known producer, Kirke La Shelle, who decided upon an immediate production. Speaking of the first night, Thomas says:- "There was no theatre available in New York, and he (La Shelle) arranged for the production of the play at Hamlin's Grand Opera House, in Chicago. La Shelle had the quality of a Captain, and I am sure that, had he lived, he would have been one of the most dominant influences in the American theatre. Only to the theatrical reader will the following be significant; but the original cast of "Arizona" included Theodore Roberts, Edwin Holt, Mattie Earle, Mabel Burt, Robert Edeson, Olive May, Sam Edwards, Arthur Byron, Vincent Serrano, Franklin Garland, Walter Hale, Lionel Barrymore and Menifee Johnstone; and the four or five other characters were by people of less repute, but of equal earnestness and ability. Few authors doing a melodrama have had better co-operation than that."

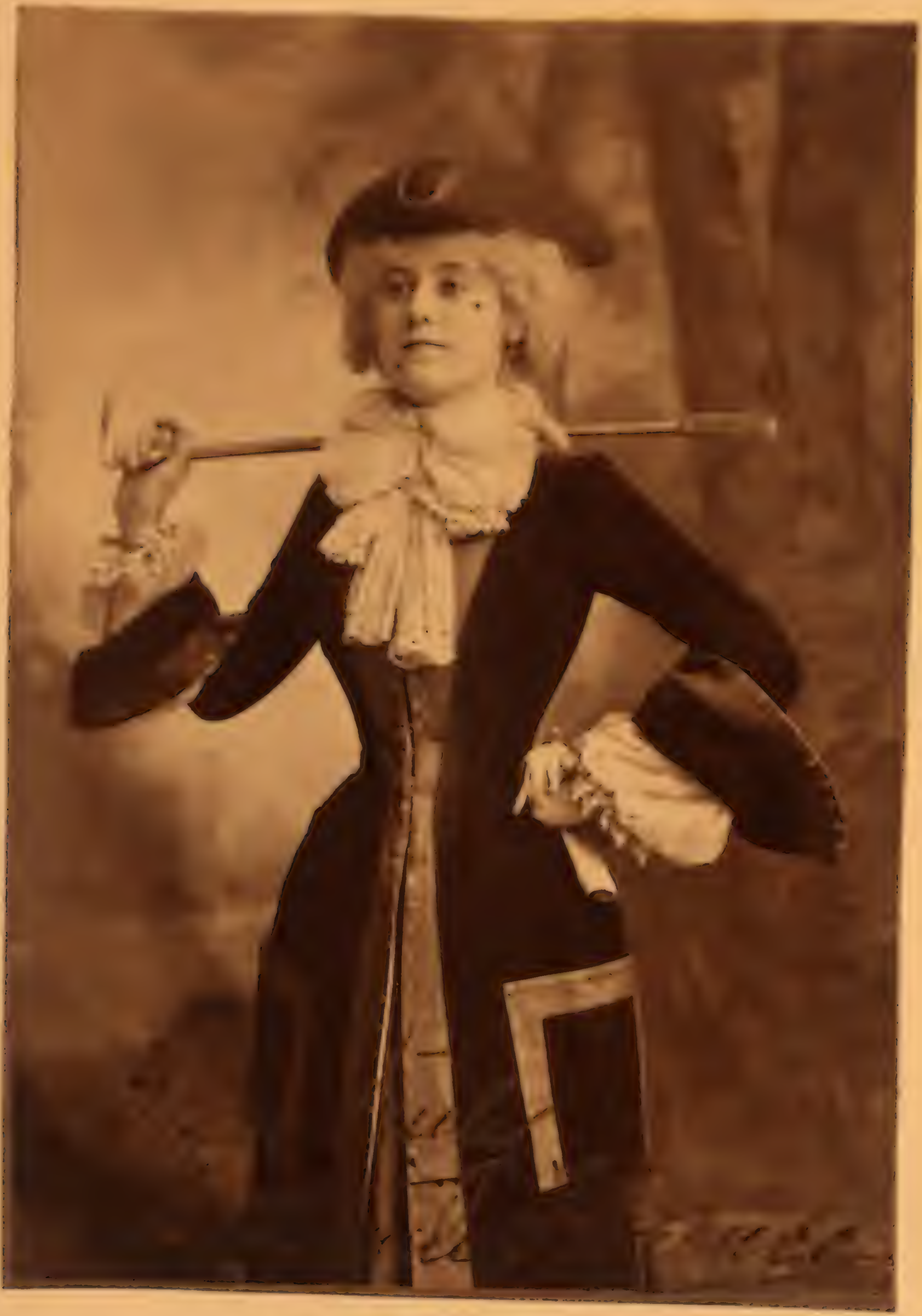
Although I was, in no sense of the word, intimate with Mr. Thomas, I have very pleasant memories of him. He was often in The Lambs, and sometimes, when we found each other at the same table for supper, I had most delightful talks with him about his many and varied experiences. I do not feel sure that he should not be ~~[illegible]~~ Rated as the outstanding playwright of America; for, after all, a man who wrote sixty-one plays, which were produced over a period of nearly half a century (1875 - 1921), most of them dealing with American subjects, has a claim to that title which cannot well be denied. To me, the best of them all was "The Witching Hour", in which John Mason made what was perhaps the greatest hit of his career. What a gripping drama that was! I never knew John Mason, though his performance of the Northern Colonel in "Shenandoah" is among my earliest recollections. I have been reading over Mr Thomas's autobiography, for about the fourth time, and to me it tells as interesting a story of the American theatre, during the years when I knew it best, as any book I know; for the author came in contact with all the managers and producers, and very nearly all the actors of note, who graced the American boards for the half century which began when I was born.

His was one of the most kindly personalities I have known, and I

shall always remember his understanding of the request of a talented young musical comedy woman, who had left the stage and married happily, but who, after a few years,felt that restlessness which sometimes attacks those members of the profession who have left Broadway. It so happened that I knew this girl intimately, and she,knowing of my acquaintance with Mr Thomas,asked me to tell him of her talents and her wish to return to stage life. Rather unwillingly I agreed to do so,but in telling the playwright of her desires I voiced my opinion that she was making a great mistake. I think I told the story fairly. I know that my statements did not underrate her talents. Thomas listened to the end of my story,and then said, - "Yes,I remember her work perfectly;she's got plenty of talent;but why does she want to go back ? Is her marriage a failure ?" "No",I said,"I think not,but she misses the bright lights." He laughed. "What do you think;would you like to see her go back ? " I shook my head. "I'll write her a letter; I think you're right," he said. And about a week later he wrote ger one of the sweetest and most understanding letters I have ever read, and - she did not return to the stage.

Thomas became a member of The Lambs when the club was in its fifteenth year,long before I joined it,and his description of the early days is so good that I have taken the liberty of quoting from it freely. In Chapter XVI, which he has entitled "Gathering Places of the Actors",he says;- "I had now become a member of The Lambs. At the clubhouse I passed more than half the time I permitted myself away from my writing. The Lambs was then in its fifteenth year and contained the best element in the profession. It was a great honour,privilege, and education to be received on equal terms by its then membership, a total a total professional number of one hundred,which included such men as Lester Wallack,Dion Boucicault,Steele Mackaye,Mark Smith,Robert G.Ingersoll,Otis Skinner, the Holland brothers - George,Edmund,and Joseph,and others of the standard that these names indicate.

"A table d'hote dinner was served for fifty cents at the large



Katherine Florence

[illegible]

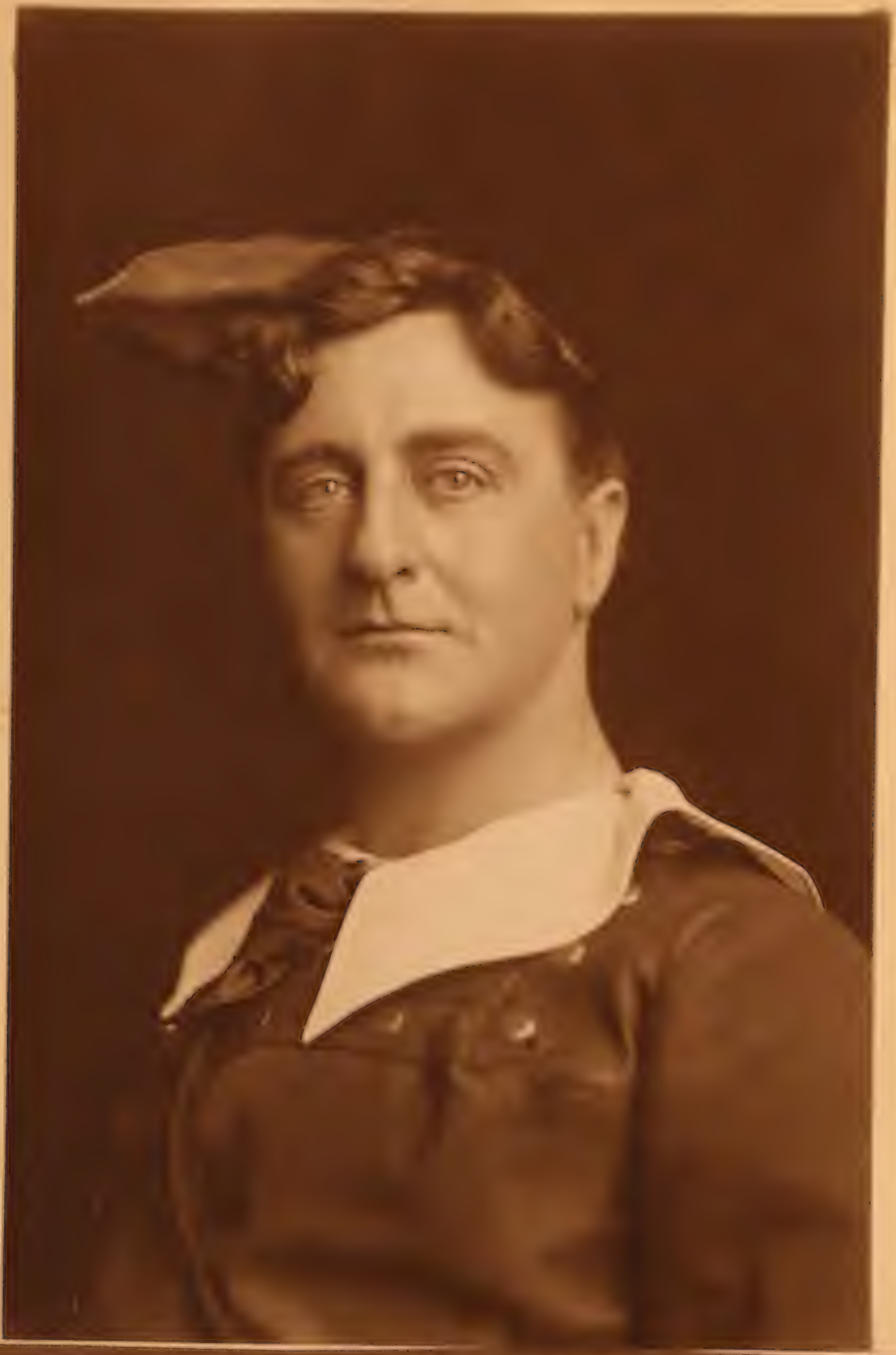
club table,where the men were like members of a family. There was a notable musical contingent and often between courses the popular songs of the time. The gayety of such youngsters as Harry Woodruff,Cyril Scott,Fritz Williams,Francis Carlyle,and Ned Bell was as memorable as the wise talk of such elders as Steele Mackaye and Frank Mayo. Fun was spontaneous and unrestrained. * * * *

"The Lambs was then at 34 West Twenty-sixth Street,between Broadway and sixth Avenue;the house an old-fashioned five-story,twenty-five-foot-front brown-stone one,with a high stoop,under which was a basement entrance. It was like its adjoining house in external looks and faced similar buildings on the north side of the street. These respectable neighbours eyed it with distrust. Leaving the Lambs and walking east to Broadway you passed the St.James Hotel on the corner. On the other side of Broadway was Delmonico's running through the short block to Fifth Avenue. The block was and still is short,because these two g) great thoroughfares wedge sharply three blocks further south. East of the long plaza made by their intersection is the park called Madison Square,a plunger fountain in the centre and the Saint-Gaudens bronze of Farragut on the northwest corner.

"Facing this square on all four sides in 1889 were beautiful and impressive buildings,each with its history fairly mellow and all with their uniform sky-line that could be enjoyed with out suggesting curvature of the spine."

How true this is and how restful,compared with the sky-scrapers which tower over Manhattan and are the first sight to greet the eye of the returning wanderer from overseas as he steams up New York harbour. As Mr Thomas says, "Life had a gentle pace,social intercourse a more genial temperature", in those days. Friends meeting stopped to exchange a word;men in groups told stories,laughed; policemen did not ask them to move on"

I wish I could go on and quote Thomas's description of the gradual developement of the old New York of which he writes to the bewildering metropolis of today,whose roar is never stilled. Dwellers in New York become so accustomed to the



Many many thanks to dear old
Ellen for a most delightful
time [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] I love New York, and I love to come back to it. [illegible]

[illegible]

Once in the house, [illegible] if I had only been away for a few days, [illegible]

[illegible]

constant turmoil which surrounds them that they fail to realise the impression it produces on a stranger; or even on one who has been away from it over a period of years. I well remember standing in the bow of one of the great ocean liners on which I was returning from England, before the airplanes had made transatlantic flights a thing of everyday occurrence. A man whose name I did not know but with whom I had chatted in the smoking room (Paul Robeson, that negro singer whose gorgeous voice has gladdened the hearts of so many of his listeners, was standing beside me, and together we watched the tall buildings of New York towering above the city as the great ship came up the harbour. It was rather a wonderful sight and it seemed to affect my neighbour for he said;- "What a wonderful city it is. I love New York, and I love to come home to it." New York is not my city and to me it is not America, but his mood communicated itself to me, and for a time I think I almost felt too that I was coming home. Had New York remained as it was when Thomas wrote the description which I have just quoted, I think I might have felt so; but when I had gone ashore and had finally extricated myself from the inquisitive Customs officials, and was on my way uptown in a taxicab which seemed to barely escape annihilation in the maelstrom of traffic at the cross-streets, I must confess that I longed for the comparative quiet and orderly procedure I had become used to in London;

Once in The Lambs, seated in the Grillroom, where I was greeted by Mi Richie Ling as if I had only been away for a few days, the feeling of peace returned, and when he told me that there was a "Gambol" on that night, I decided to postpone my trip to New England till the next day; for I rarely miss one of The Lambs Gambols if I am in New York. Be it known, there is a theatre on the top-story of the new clubhouse in West Forty-fourth Street - a theatre in which many a play has seen its first production, often in a somewhat rudimentary form - a theatre where the orchestra in the old days was often conducted by that great Irish-American composer, Victor Herbert; a theatre in which the minor parts, as well as the leading ones were often played by men who starred at the heads of their own companies. And always, afterwards, there was supper downstairs for the members of the club and any guests who had been lucky enough to be asked. What evenings those were. It was - as Mr Thomas has said

" a great honour,privilege,and education," to be one of that membership.

To quote again from Mr Thomas, - " There are few special clubs to whose functions one can with propriety ask attention. But The Lambs,because of its theatrical membership and prominence,is among that few. For many years an occasional night had been taken in the club when members free from professional calls got together in an entertainment the backbone of which was some burlesque by some skilled man upon some current success. Programmes from several of these intimate performances had occasionally been given to the public of New York. In 1899 it was decided to make a much more pretentious appeal by players,all of whom should be stars. Contracts for the exclusive services,at one dollar per week,for the last week in May,were drawn between the club on one side,and on the other - Nat Goodwin, De Wolf Hopper,Stuart Robson,William Crane,Willie Collier,Jefferson D'Angelis, Chauncey Olcott,Digby Bell,Francis Carlyle,Wilton Lackaye,Harry Woodruff,Charles Klein,Eugene Cowles,Joseph Holland,Harry Conor,Fritz Williams,Burr McIntosh,Joseph Grismer,Jesse Williams,Victor Herbert,Ignacio Martinetti,Victor Harris,and some forty other men of almost equal prominence;a half dozen playwrights,and as many musicians; also Victor Herbert's band and orchestra of fifty pieces.

The company,all told,included over one hundred men. It was computed that their joint salaries,according to what they were getting upon the road, would for that week have amounted to one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars. Theatres were leased for one night only in New York,Brooklyn,Washington,Philadelphia, Boston,Springfield,Pittsburgh,and Chicago. Advance work for publicity was done in all these cities. Contracts existed for a special train of four sleepers,three dining-cars,and two baggage-cars. * * * * * * * * The club gave the week of gambols in the cities named and took in sixty-two thousand dollars."

This description deals with one of the earliest Gambols;indeed I believe it was the first of the public Gambols,which have continued with a few breaks ever since,and which have been of the greatest financial help to the club in defraying the cost of the new Clubhouse and of the management of the organization

Sincerely yours
Guy Standing

Sir Guy Standing

throughout many years of its existence. I could go on and tell of many of the functions of the club;of its boundless hospitality to visitors from overseas; of its loving care for the welfare of its members and their families,who had perhaps fallen on hard times. But some day someone,far better fitted than I am, will write that story,and after all,these are the purely personal reminiscences of a very unimportant lay member who is proud of his long membership in an organization which has brought him so many friends.

One of John Drew's greatest successes was a play by Captain Marshall called "The Second in Command",in which the part of Lt.Colonel Miles Anstruther was taken by Guy Standing,who was afterward knighted for his services in the British Navy during the First Great War. Standing was a most attractive chap;tall,good-looking, and even in those days an excellent actor. I came to know him better when the play came to Boston during the second year of its run;and since he and I had many tastes in common,he spent many of his week-ends with me in the days when I was living in my little cottage at South Lincoln. Guy was a man of many talents,for as well as being an excellent actor,he had a nice voice,played the piano in a most charming manner,and was a painter of no mean achievement - especially of marine subjects. At that time my friend Julian Chamberlain was living with me and Standing helped him very considerably in his early efforts at portraits of animals. Chamberlain was thoroughly familiar with water-colour painting,but had done no work in oils,and I can almost hear him and Guy discussing the merits of various mediums - in which "Siccatif de Harlem" played a prominent part in their conversation. I did n't know then - I don't know now - what "Siccatif de Harlem" is;but it must have been wonderful stuff,for the results were very good.. I have said that Guy was a charming companion. How often on Sundays,I have seen him sit down at the piano and sing one of those delightful songs about "The China Dog and the Calico Cat",or "The Burglar", the words and music of which he had written himself.

An expert yachtsman,Guy was not a hunting man,nor was he even a

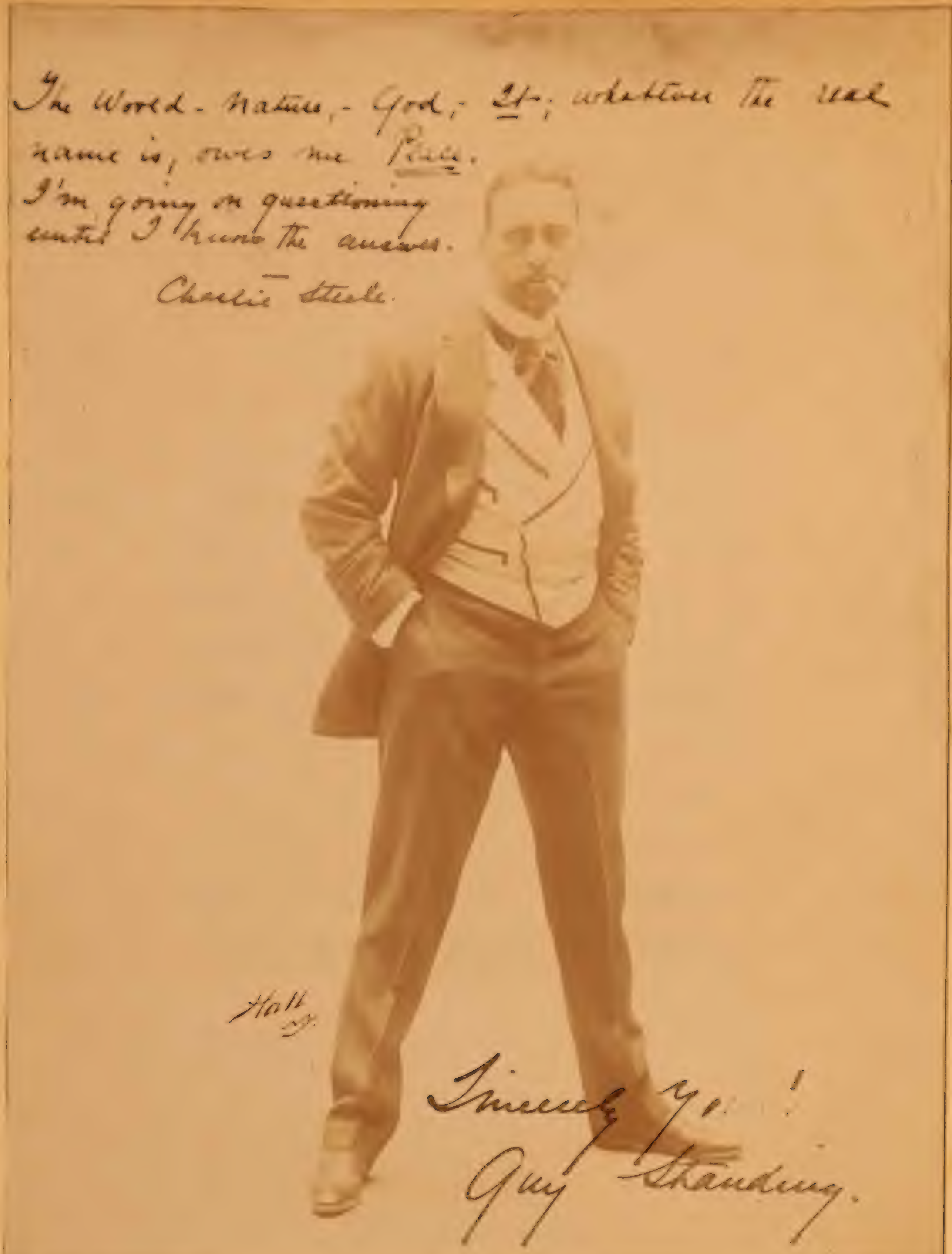
horseman,although,like many another actor,he rather wished to be considered one. One year he came to Boston with Nat Goodwin,in a play called "Wolfville",in which he played the part of rather an attractive blackguard who went by the name of "English Bill". The play ran in Boston for two weeks,and on the middle Sunday, Guy came,as was his custom,to Lincoln to spend the week-end with me. Sunday afternoon he expressed a desire to go to ride,and I thinking of course that he would have sense enough to be content to hack on the road,put him on a very quiet old hunter. We had a nice hack and came home through a lane which led through the fields opposite my house. It was properly gated and it would have been an easy matter to get home without taking any jumps;but that was not what Guy wanted. His ambition was apparently to ride a hunter over a fence,for he asked me if the horse he was on could jump. I feared there would be trouble,but I thought that even a greenhorn,such as I knew him to be on a horse,would be taken safely over the three foot stone wall by the horse he was on,and I knew that nothing short of being able to say that he had ridden over a fence would satisfy Guy;so I said, "yes,come ahead and I'll give you a lead". Of Course the horse negotiated the fence safely and Guy managed to stick on his back, although he lurched forward on landing and nearly fell off.

"Well," I said, "that was all right. You managed that well enough." He did not answer for a minute and then he said in somewhat shaky tones -

"I've hurt my arm Alex. I think I've put my shoulder out".

"Nonsense," I answered, "you can't have put your shoulder out. You've never left your saddle".

"But I can't raise my right arm",he said. "I've done something" and then I noticed for the first time that his right arm was hanging by his side. Well,to make a long story short,I led his horse home for him - luckily we were very near the house - and we sent for a doctor from Concord;who,when he came,announced that the shoulder had been dislocated. Guy must have caught his elbow on the pommel of the saddle in lurching forward. The doctor tried to put it back,but Guy's muscular developement was such that,although he tried to relax,he was unable to do so,and we



The World - Nature, - God, - It -; whatever the real name is, owes me Peace.
I'm going on questioning
until I know the answer.

Charlie Steele.

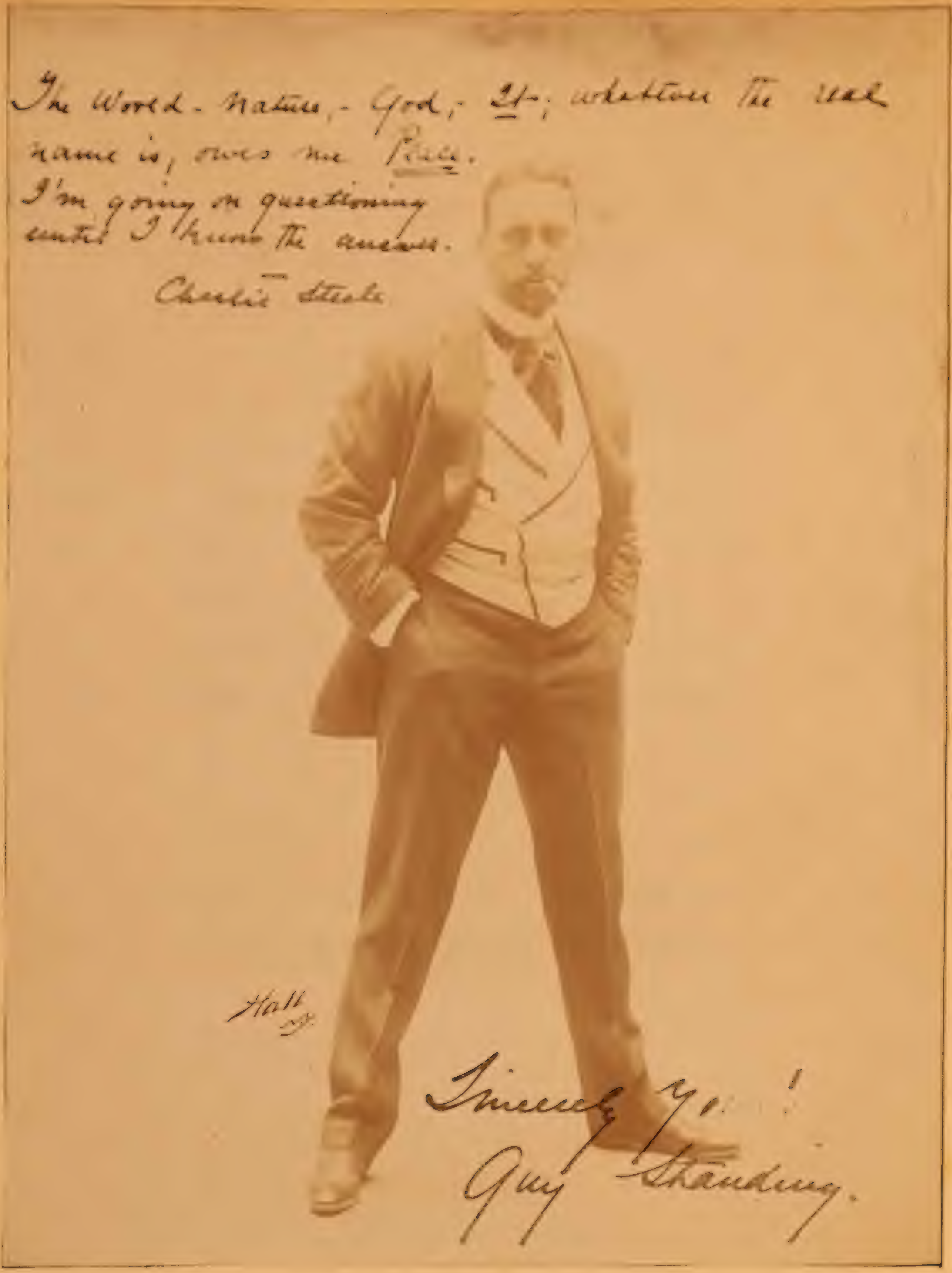
Sincerely Yrs!
Guy Standing.

as
"Charlie Steele"
in
"The Right of Way"

had to give him an anaesthetic before the dislocation could be reduced. He was very funny coming out of the ether, and gave Chamberlain and my Stud Groom and myself all we could do to keep him in order. It was all very funny from our point of view, and I think that Guy enjoyed his protracted visit to Lincoln very much; but I fancy the cast of "Wolfville" suffered badly from the loss of "English Bill"

Standing drifted back to England in 1908 and played in London for several years. When the Great War broke out he went into the Royal Navy, and in due course he was placed in command of one of the "Q-boats", and so distinguished himself that he was knighted for his services. He returned to America in 1926 and I remember his spending a Sunday again at "Middlesex Meadows" in that year. My wife was away, but Chamberlain came out that week-end, and he and I sat before the fire in the great Hall and listened to the old songs that we had heard so often in former years. That was the last I saw him, and the last play I saw him in was t in that year, when he appeared with that charming and talented actress, Jane Cowle, in "Jenny", in which they scored a great success. Like many another actor, Guy drifted out to Hollywood, where he played in several films - notably "The Lives of a Bengal Lancer", which was the only one I happened to see. If he had been alive when the present War broke out, I am sure that he would have returned to England and again joined the Royal Navy, where he had served with so much distinction twenty years before. But he had died from Heart failure, the result of weakness caused by a snake-bite, when on a hunting trip in California some years before.

The Standing family were all talented. Old Herbert Standing, Guy's father, was well known in the London stage, and afterwards in America. His brother, Percy, whom I knew slightly, was a brilliant pianist and a composer in a small way. Guy was married twice and his daughter-in-law by his first marriage, Katherine Standing, gave every promise of making a name for herself in American drama. I saw her play several leading parts in a Stock Company which was organised and controlled by Henry Jewett, who had been in Richard Mansfield company for many years. Miss Standing was so like her father that, although I had never met her at the time I first



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saw her on the stage, I knew at once that she must be Guy's daughter. His second marriage was to Dorothy Hammond, a talented American actress who had her early experience in the old Lyceum Stock Company, under Daniel Frohman. The daughter of this marriage - who goes under the name of Kay Hammond - is well known on the British stage, a brilliant and talented comedienne. And so the family carries on.

Speaking of theatrical families, I must not forget the Drews and thos brilliant offshoots of the Drew family - the Barrymores. An article in *The Philadelphia Enquirer*, published a few days before John Drew's first appearance at the Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia, on March 22nd, 1873, said:-

> "John Drew (Senior) belonged to a school of actors that is passing away rapidly, leaving no copy behind, we fear. Of that school, Mrs Drew (John Drew's mother) is a noble representative, and we would like to hope that her daughter and son are also representative of it. Miss Drew has appeared but two or three times on the stage, and the impression she then created was favourable. Her worst faults are her youth and inexperience, and both of these time will overcome. Of Mr Drew we know nothing. But remembering with profound gratitude the pleasure that the mother and father of these children have given the public; how great and conscientious an artist Mrs. Drew is - and John Drew was - we trust for their sakes that the old play-goers of Philadelphia will unite on Saturday to give the young players, just entering on the career by which they are to live, a substantial, hearty welcome. It may be that, for their own sakes, they deserve such welcome; but whether this be so or not, they deserve it for the sake of those great artists whose children they are, and who for so many years gave of their bes to the pleasure and entertainment of the town."

It is interesting to note that the "Miss Drew" referred to in the clipping afterwards became - as Mrs Maurice Barrymore - the mother of those three famous stars of the theatrical world, Ethel, Lionel, and Jack Barrymore. Of Ethel I have already spoken. She is my oldest friend on the stage to-day, and when I think that

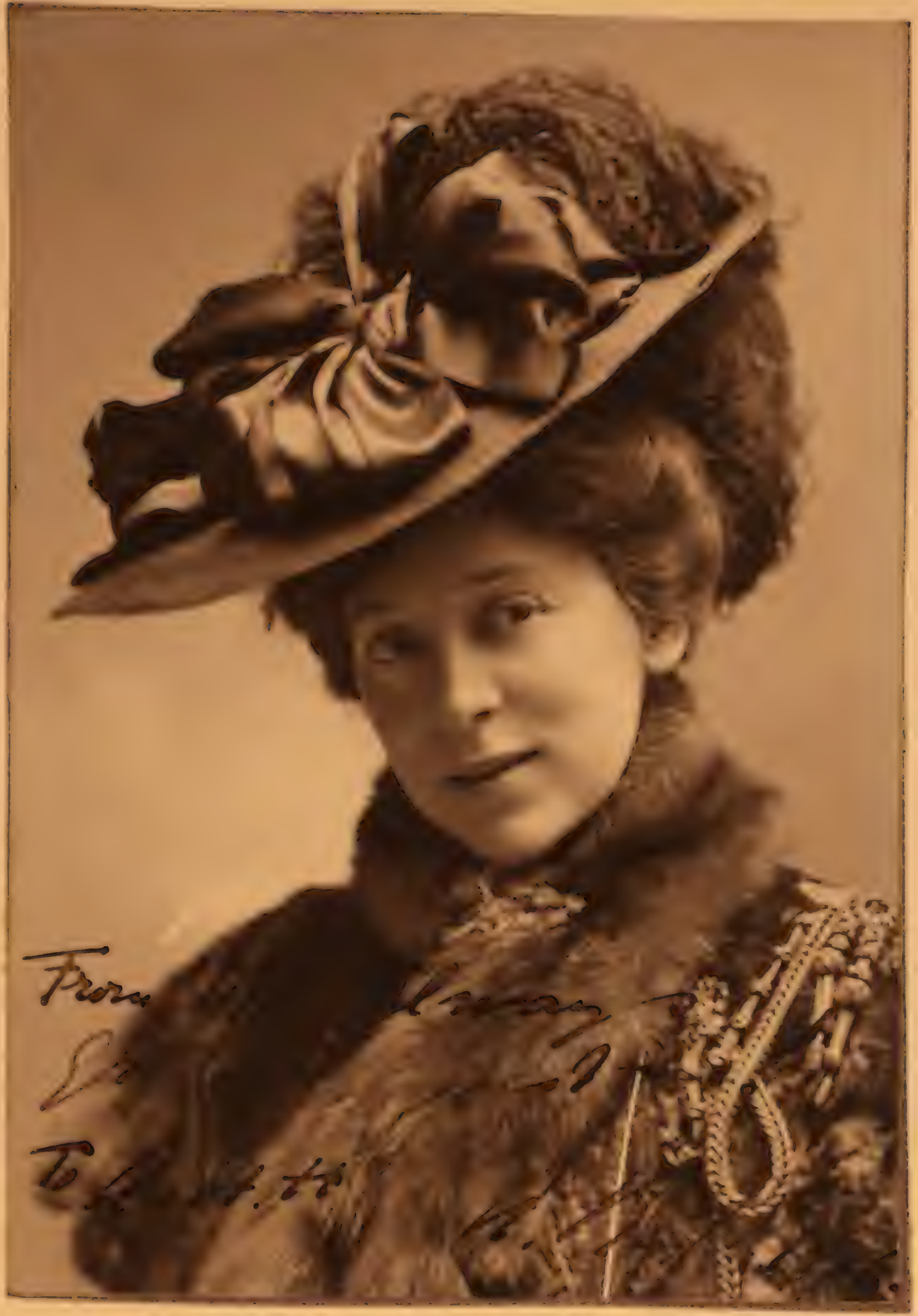
it was forty-eight years ago that we stood on that stairway in Mrs Beebe's house in Boston, it makes me realise how old I am. Lionel I never knew, but I have always admired his acting, from the time he made his first great success as the Italian organ-grinder in "The Mummy and the Humming Bird". Jack I have seen a little more of. I remember him first as the telegraph operator in the dramatization of Richard Harding Davis's story, "The Dictator", and then through all the varied experiences which the theatre brings, culminating in what was to me his greatest achievement - "Hamlet". Jack Barrymore is a born actor, and like many of his profession, a man of the volatile character possessed by many of those who are made famous by their work in the theatre. To-day, he is perhaps best known by his work in the films, which - alas for the theatrical profession - has been the fate of many another actor. His first wife - Katherine Harris Barrymore - I knew well when she was playing with her sister-in-law, Ethel, on Zoe Atkins's drama "Declassée". The marriage was an unhappy one and there are no children to carry on the family tradition. Ethel's daughter, Ethel Barrymore Colt, has, I believe, made her debut on the American stage, but so far as I know, has not as yet achieved successes which warrant her carrying on the "Royal Family".

In the old days, when I took the midnight express which landed me in New York early in the morning, I used always to go to The Lambs for breakfast. There was always someone there, for the Club was never closed - one of the traditions being that the key of the front door was thrown into the Hudson River when the house was opened - and I was apt to find someone with whom I could chat. One morning, I saw in the Grill an oldish man eating his breakfast at one of the little tables. He was a stranger to me, but in accordance with the custom of the Club, I went over to his table, introduced myself, and asked if I might sit with him. During the next half hour I learned that he was an Englishman who had landed that very morning from his ship, and not knowing New York particularly well, had come straight to The Lambs, to which he had a card of introduction. His name, he told me, was Charles Warner, and though I knew little of the English stage in those days, I had heard of

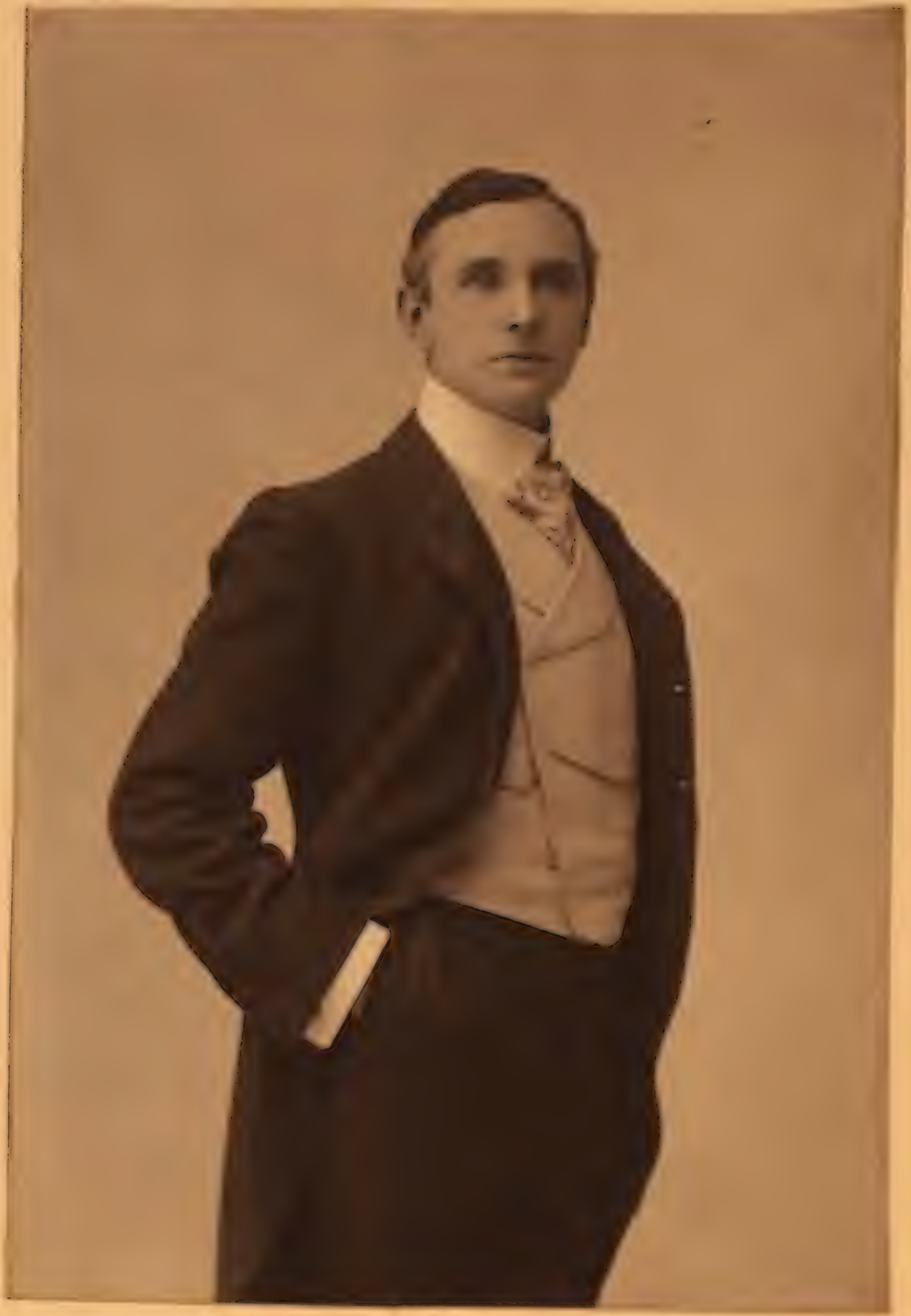
an English actor who had been making a terrific success in London in an old-fashioned play called "Drink". Was this the man, I wondered? Later I was to find out that it was he whose appearance in a gruesome monologue called "On the Telephone" had made such a sensation in London. He played them both in New York, but I cannot remember that he appeared in any other drama - certainly not in an important part. He was a most charming old man, and I used often to sit with him during the evenings, when the other members of the Club were away at their work and the Grillroom was comparatively empty. He used often to talk about his boy Harry, who, he said, was following in his footsteps; and one night he told me the glad news that he had secured an engagement for him to play the leading man's part in a dramatic version of Bret Harte's story of Western life, "Salome Jane". The star part was played by Eleanor Robson, who at that time was just beginning her career.

Harry Warner - perhaps better known to frequenters of the cinema to-day as H.B.Warner - had an attractive personality, and withal, he had inherited his father's histrionic talent. In his second year with Miss Robson, she appeared in Israel Zangwill's delightful comedy, "Merely Mary Anne", which ran successfully for two seasons. Warner used often to come out to Lincoln, and, as he was an excellent horseman, we had many a ride together during his week-end visits. Old Charles Warner died a few years after his son came to America and Harry married and I saw less of him for a few years, until I found out - quite by chance one summer - that he was living near me at Rockport, Massachusetts, where Mrs Higginson and I dined with him on several occasions. Again, for a period of years, we lost track of one another until one Spring he came out to Lincoln with the second Mrs Warner - Miss Rita Stanwood - who had been his leading lady in several plays. Harry, like many another actor, has migrated to the Pacific coast and I have not seen him "in the flesh", so to speak, for a good many years; though I often see his face and figure on the screen.

Zangwill wrote several plays which were successfully produced, and in one of these, "Jinny the Carrier", Annie Russell portrayed the heroine of the charming story of English country life. Her leading man was Oswald Yorke, whom I had first



Annie Russell

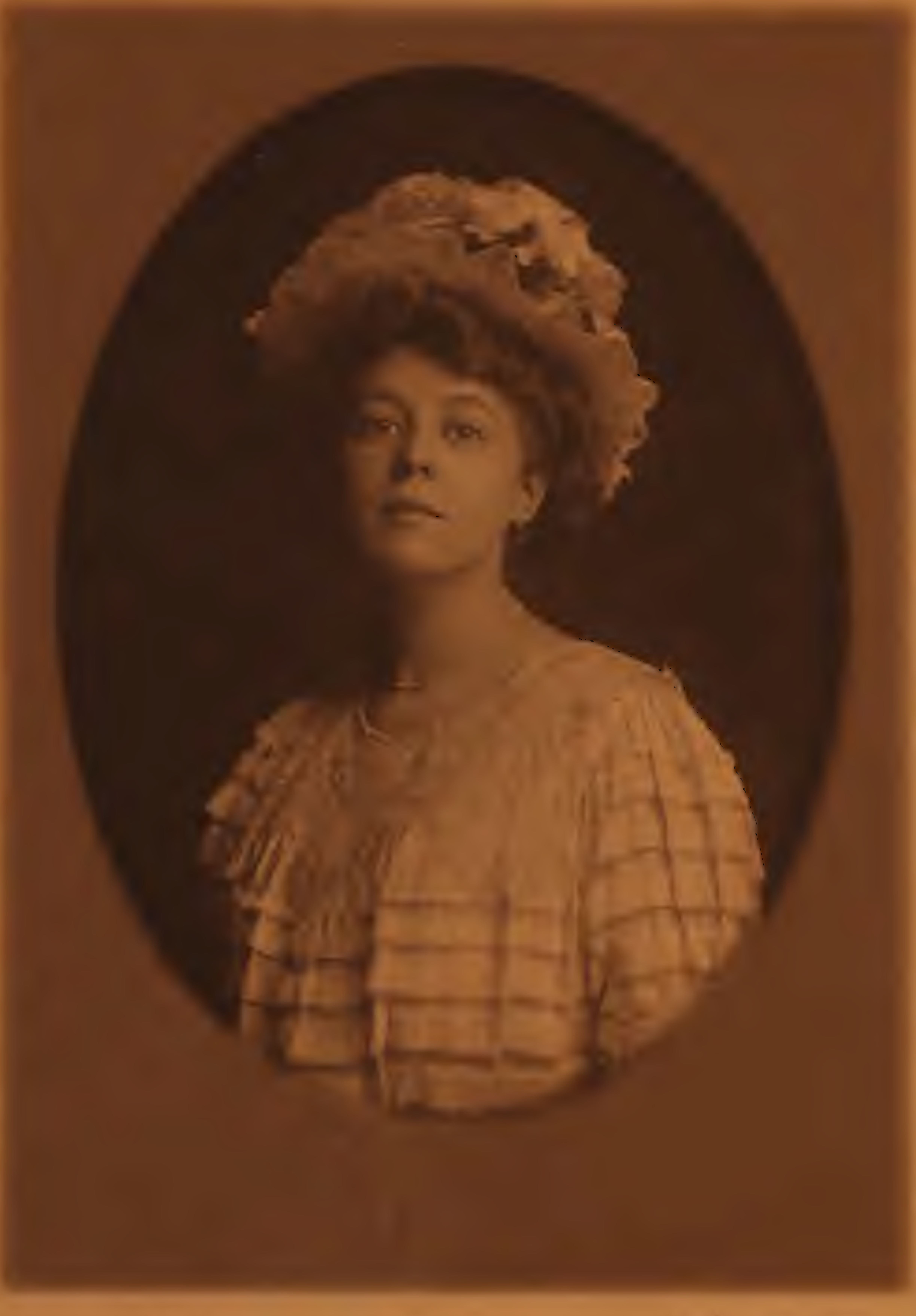


Oswald Yorke

seen playing a minor part with John Drew, in "The Second in Command". Yorke and I happened to be on the same train to Boston on the Monday morning on which the play opened at the Hollis Street Theatre, and I told him that I had booked a seat that night for the opening performance. On reaching home, I found an invitation from an old friend, Mrs Inches, to dine with her that night, and after the theatre - which she too was attending - to come to the Somerset Club for supper, in order to meet Miss Russell, whom I did not know. It was Yorke's first appearance with Miss Russell, and I was rather amused, on going back to his dressing-room after the play to congratulate him on a very successful performance, to have him say:-"I hear you are going to supper with my star. You'll find her charming, and I wish you would make tactful enquiry as to whether she likes my performance or not." I laughed and said I would; and, as a matter of fact, forgot about it until Miss Russell said to me, at supper:- "Mr Higginson, Mrs Inches tells me that you know my leading man well. I like him so much. I hope he will be happy in my company." What more natural than that I should ask them both to supper with me at the University Club a few nights later ? What more natural than that I should put Yorke up at the Club during his stay in Boston ? And what more natural than that I should find them supping cosily together there on several occasions ? At the end of six weeks they announced their engagement - I think one of the few really happy theatrical marriages that I can remember. They were my guests at the first regular meal that was served in my new house at "Middlesex Meadows", in 1905; and in my room there hangs a picture of Miss Russell beside that of her husband, on which is written:- "From your always grateful guest, Annie Russell." The last I heard of them they were living together happily in Florida - a beautiful place in which to end a successful career.

No man was a greater success in his day, on both sides of the water, than that kindly American star, Raymond Hitchcock. "Hitchy", as all his friends called him, was, underneath his veneer of almost asinine humour, a very sweet, kindly human being. His odd personality, his ever-present vacant stare, gave people who did not know him the impression that he was in the habit of dining very well before

To "brother Alf" —



Kate — November 9th - 1904

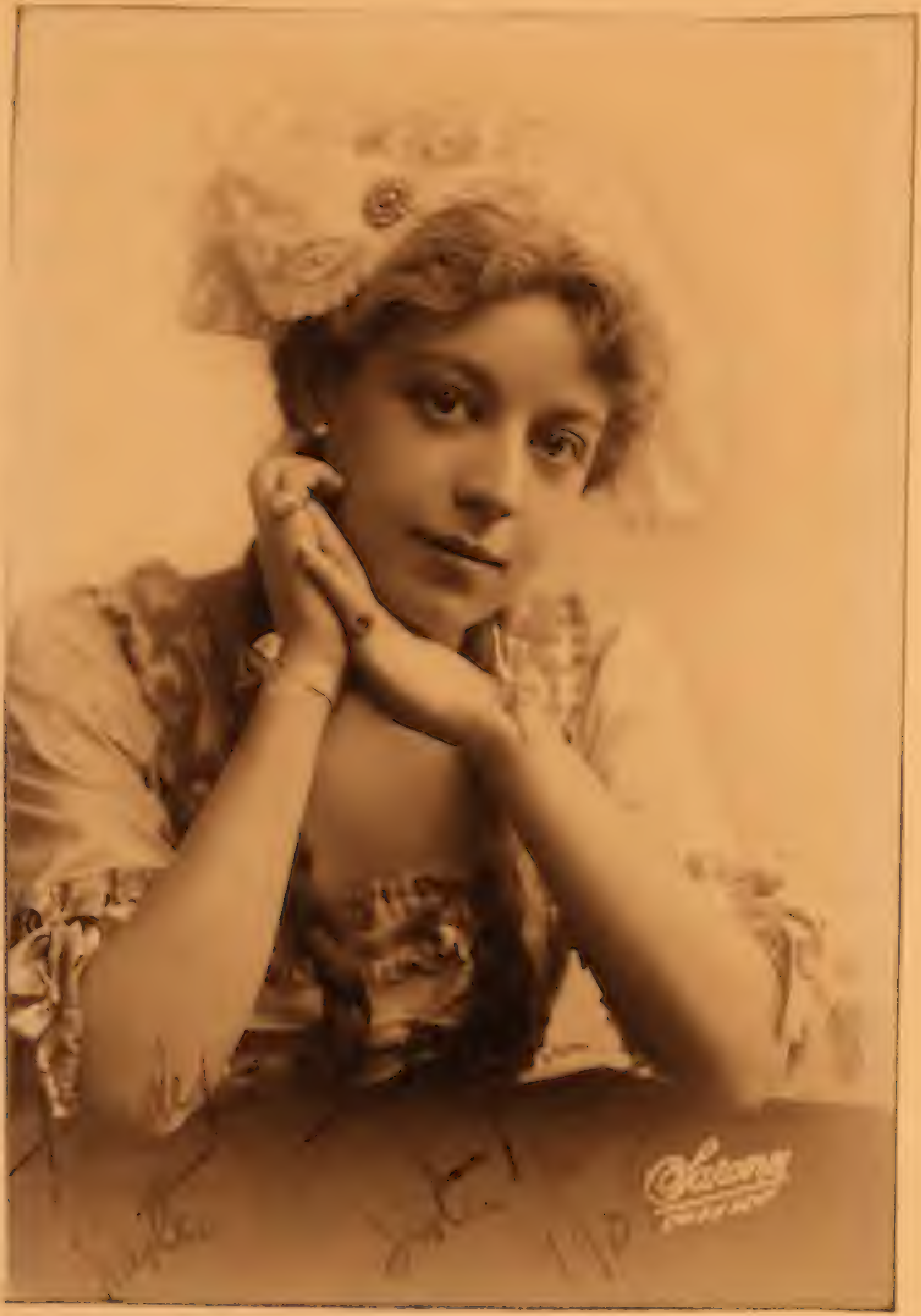
Sister 1907

Catherine Cooper

every performance; that he was apt to be "half-seas-over"; and that he "drunk like a fish" - to use an American expression. As a matter of fact, he was a teetotaler and never drunk a drop of anything at any time. He had, however, a habit which was terribly annoying to some of his friends, of singling them out in the audience, if t they happened to be at his theatre, and carrying on a conversation with them, as if they were members of his cast. It was sometimes very funny and rather amusing to other people in the house; but often quite annoying to the recipients of his attentions. One evening, just after the entrance of the United States into the first Great War, I stopped at The Lambs on my way back from Washington, where I had gone to try to get a commission; and it so happened that in the Grillroom I found Hitchcock having his supper. We got into conversation and he asked me what I was going to do that evening; and when I told him that I had no plans, suggested that I come and see his show, which was playing at a nearby theatre.

" I'll leave a ticket for you in the Box Office," he said. "Mind you don't miss any of it; it's a very good show." I thanked him and went to the Ritz-Carlton for dinner, where, happening to fall in with two ladies whom I knew well, I dined at the same table with them. They told me that they too were going to see "Hitchy Koo", so we all went to the theatre together. I got my seat at the Box Office and we proceeded down the aisle; they having shown the usher their tickets, and I having thoughtlessly followed them, without looking at mine. The curtain was up; Hitchcock was on; and I was just about to follow my friends into their seats, when I heard his voice from the stage:-

" No, Alex," it said, "that's not your seat, and you can't sit with your friends. Go back up the aisle and the usher will show you down to your seat on the other side of the house." Somewhat abashed, I followed the usher - Hitchcock had several very pretty Chinese girls in native costume acting as ushers - up the aisle, while he continued:- "Miss Li, take Alex up the aisle and around the back of the house and down the other aisle to his seat. He doesn't know where it is." And addressing the audience in a confidential tone, he continued:- "This, ladies and



Kitty Cooper

in

"Miss Hook of Holland"

gentlemen, is Alex Higginson from Boston, who married Jeanne Calducci, who was at one time my dancing partner. Alex has been to Washington to try to get a commission. He's going into the Army and he doesn't want to be bothered to shave and that's the reason he's got that terribel red beard, which makes him look like" - he paused a moment - " shall I say a Russian Grand Duke?" By that time I had reached my seat and he addressed me again:- "Alex," he said, "I couldn't get you a seat in the front row, but I hope you'll be comfortable there and see everything that goes on." He made me a low bow, and as I sank abashed in my seat, while my neighbours tittered, he turned to Irene Bordoni, his leading woman, and said:- "Now, Bordoni, the play can go on." That was only one of Hitchcock's tricks.

And now let us turn from the ridiculous to the sublime - for I think there was something approaching the sublime in the work which one of America's best-loved musical stars did during the first Great War. Elsie Janis was one of the first to give entertainment to the troops at the Front - both British and American. I knew her as the child celebrity in that extravaganza "The Vanderbilt Cup", when her performance was the talk of New York. I remember that my wife was eager to see her play, and it was not long after that that some mutual friends brought Elsie and her mother out to Lincoln, where we had such a plaesant time that the festivities lasted through dinner and well into the night. We used to see the Janises - for Elsie and her mother were inseparable - when they came to Boston from time to time, and then shortly before the outbreak of the War, she went to London (I think under the management of C.B.Cochran). London liked Elsie,and Elsie liked London, and presently there was a rumour that she,who had turned down many of her own country men,had finally capitulated,and become engaged to a well known Englishman. Then came the War and Elsie Janis was one of the first to offer her services as an Entertainer for the Forces. One never heard,in America,exactly what happened;but we knew that Elsie's dream of a home had been shattered by the War,for her man never came back. She returned to America several years later,and organised a little company which played there and also in England,under the title of "Elsie Janis and her

To the "General"
from
Ellis [illegible]-Shelton

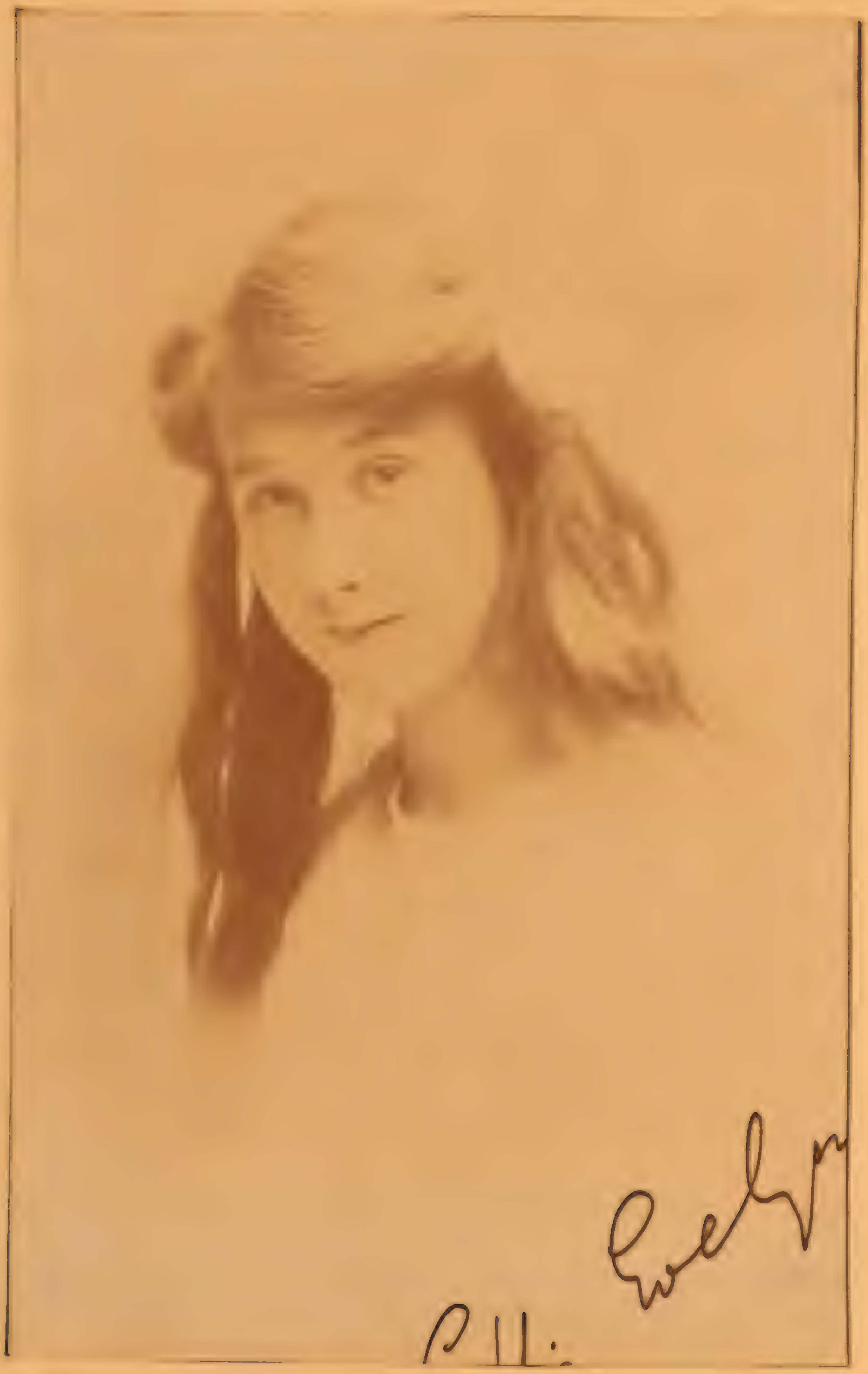
Shell

Gang".

They were playing in London when I came over in 1928,but her play closed a few days after my arrival,and though I saw her across the footlights, I did n't get a chance to meet her,or Mrs Janis,though I talked with them both on the telephone. Poor Elsie. The war dealt her a very hard blow,though it must have been a consolation to her to know that she was perhaps the best beloved of all those theatrical stars who afterward followed her example and brought cheer to the men at the front.

One of the most charming American musical comedy stars of those days was dainty Christie McDonald,among whose greatest successes was Victor Herbert's delightful operetta "Sweethearts",which has been revived so successfully in recent years. Catherine Cooper,who had been my wife's running mate in the early days when both girls played with D'Angelis in "Fantana",was with Miss McDonald in another tuneful operetta "Miss Hook of Holland",in which she played a small part. Catherine too might have gone far on the stage had she not retired and been happily married to a New Yorker.

During my visit to London in 1904 I was most hospitably entertained - as I have already said - by Miss Ellis Jeffreys,and when she came to America the following year,in "The Prince Consort",in which Ben Webster was her leading man,of course I did my best to repay her hospitality. Her manager,George Tyler,gave her an excellent company and her coming was heralded with a fanfare of trumpets worthy of Duse;but both in her first year's tour and the subsequent one,in which she presented a most delightful comedy of English life called "The Fascinating Mr.Vandervelt",the American public,particularly in the Middle West,failed to appreciate the delicate comedy of which she was past mistress. In Boston,where she presented "London Assurance she made a tremendous success,but the type of play which succeeds in England is often not understood in America,where the audiences are constantly on the lookout for something new and sensational. But if Miss Jeffrey's visit was not a success from a professional point of view,I hope and feel that she enjoyed her stay on the Western

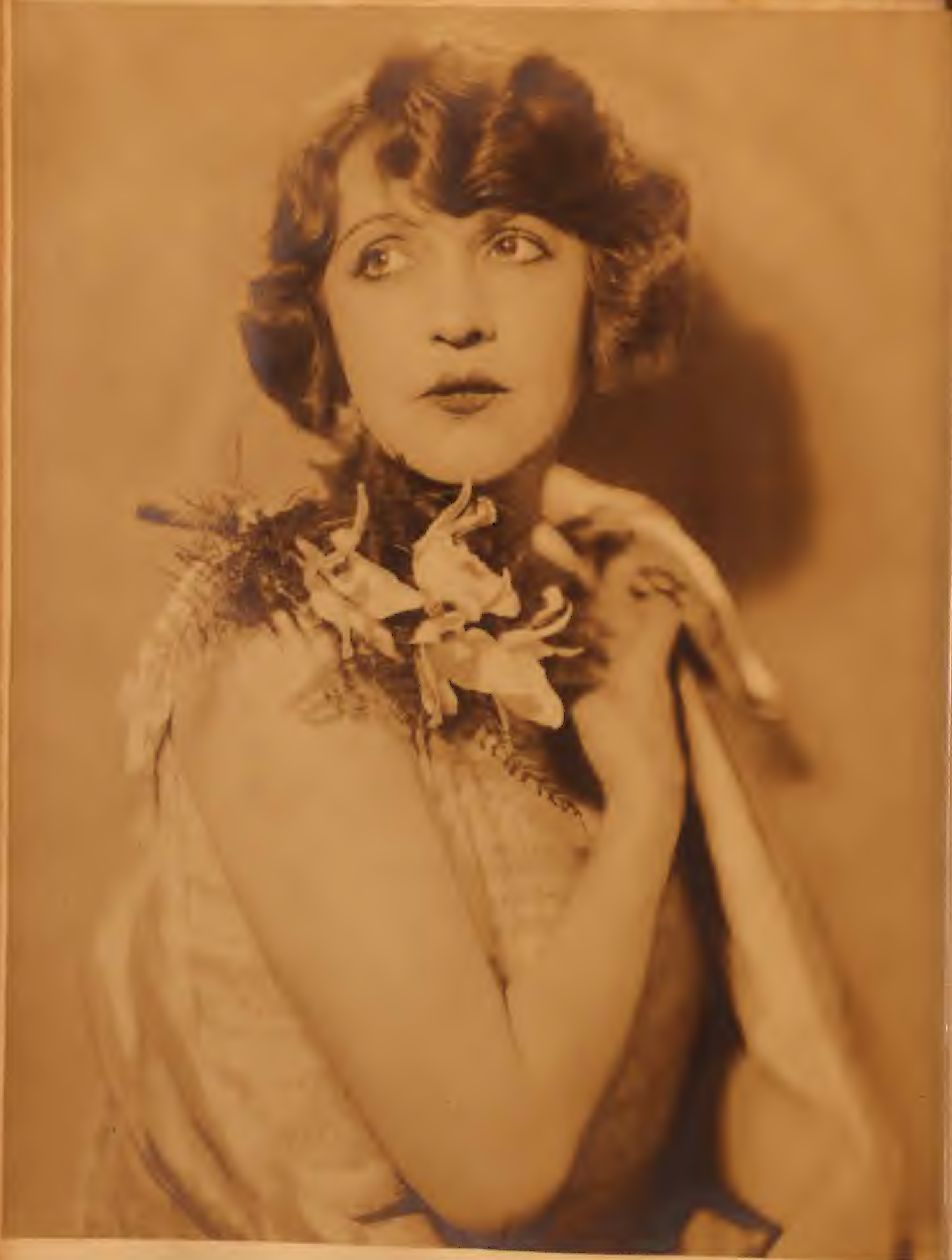

Evelyn Ellis

Ellis Jr

continent,which I am sure her daughter,Evelyn Curzon,looks back to with happy memories. Particularly do I hope this because that same young lady,when only eight years old,spent the entire winter with me,and in those days took the place of the son,of whose companionship I was robbed. When many years later,my wife and I came to England,there was no trouble to which Ellis Jeffreys did not go to make us feel at home;and though to-day we see each other but seldom,I venture to hope that she treasures many happy memories of "Middlesex Meadows".

I suppose it was because of love of England and England's ways and sports that so many of her sons found their way to "Middlesex Meadows". If a stranger were to scan my Guest Book,and see inscribed therein the names of those friends who have visited me,he would find among them many famous English actors - Charles Hawtrey,Frank Worthing,Ben Webster,Charles Cherry,H.B.Warner,Jack Crawford,Ernest Lawford,and many others - but none among them have I found more charming than that delightful comedian,Cyril Maude,whom I first saw on the stage of the Haymarket Theatre twenty years before he honoured my board at Lincoln. I saw Mr Maude across the footlights when he first came to Boston in "Grumpy",but at the time of his visit I was just leaving for a protracted stay in his own country,and we did not meet. Several years later,however,when he came to Boston in that brilliant comedy of Frederick Lonsdale's, "Aren't we All" I was more fortunate,and I saw quite a little of him,and had the pleasure of having him as my guest at "Middlesex Meadows". He had retired from the stage when next I found myself in England,and though I knew that he lived "somewhere in Devon",not far from me,our paths did not cross until he and my wife,who happened to be with her Mobile Theatre Company near Plymouth,during the winter of 1941,played with him at a benefit given at the Palace Theatre there,

And now I have come to the telling of the last chapter of my reminiscences of "the front row",and of the people of the theatre. In the last months of the Great War it so happened that I was in command of a Remount Station at Camp Grant near Rockford,Illinois. It was my habit to journey to Chicago, hardly a hundred miles South, on Saturday afternoons, when my work was finished, and stop twenty-four



M. N. H.

[illegible]

[illegible] after the rehearsal, I was able [illegible] performance, [illegible] appearing in [illegible] Lady". I took his advice, [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] in California, [illegible] Los Angeles. [illegible]

Again I [illegible]

hours at the Blackstone Hotel, where I could get a good dinner; an excellent room, and a pleasant evening at the theatre, before I returned to my Camp on Sunday afternoon. It was a pleasant break in the week's work, and though it could not always be managed, it was something to look forward to.

One Saturday evening in early December, after the Armistice, I ran into the late Chauncey Olcott in the lobby of the hotel. The genial Irish comedian was just hurrying off to his performance, but he had time enough to advise me to go to see Leo Carillo, who was at that time appearing in "The Chorus Lady". I took his advice; enjoyed myself very much; and afterwards came back to have my supper at the hotel. As I was finishing, I saw Olcott, accompanied by my old acquaintance Bob Edeson, and a lady, come in and seat themselves for supper on the opposite side of the room; and I stopped to speak to them on my way out. I had not seen Edeson for some years, but he introduced me to his wife, whom I had not met, and suggested that I come to supper with them on the following night - which, as a matter of fact, I did.

Several years afterwards, happening to go to the Eltinge Theatre in New York to see a play called "The Woman on the Jury", then in the middle of a successful run, I recognised in Mary Newcomb - who played the principal part - my chance acquaintance in Chicago; and being alone, I sent back a note asking if she would come out to supper with me. On going to the Stage Door for my answer after the performance was over, I found a message asking me to wait, and a few moments later, Miss Newcomb came out, and very kindly suggested that I should come back to her flat on East 38th Street, where she told me her father was waiting, and have supper with them. I remember that we had a very pleasant evening, and she told me something of her experiences in California, where she had been acting at the Majestic Theatre in Los Angeles, with Edward Everett Horton, who has since made a name for himself in the films.

Again I lost track of Miss Newcomb for a couple of years, but perhaps Fate was destined to bring us together; for we met again in New York, after my wife had died, and after Mary Newcomb had separated from her husband. I was present at

Miss Crossman

Mrs. [illegible]

the opening night of her first starring venture. "Nighthawk", which had a successful run at the Bijou Theatre on 45th Street, and less than a month after its close, in June of 1925, we were married at Concord, Massachusetts. For two years we spent most of the time travelling abroad, or leading an idle pleasant life at our home in the country; and during that period, I have a very vivid recollection of a day spent with Chauncey Olcott, at his delightful house at Saratoga. But the lure of the theatre was too strong, and in January of 1927, Mrs Higginson played a short engagement in Chicago, in a play dealing with episodes in the Great War, called "The Woman Disputed". Another play, "The Distant Drum", followed; and then we decided to come to England in order that my wife should make her debut in London. "The Woman Disputed was the play chosen, but for various reasons this was abandoned, and the three-act drama, "Jealousy", substituted in its place. The orginal play, written in French, by Louis Verneuil, contains many characters; but in the English version, rewritten by Eugene Walter, there are only two. In the New York production, the two parts were played by Fay Bainter and John Halliday, and Al Woods, who owned the rights of the play, proposed to my wife that she should play the part of "Valerie" in London, and suggested that he bring a leading man from America to play opposite to her. To this arrangement she agreed, and accordingly, Mary Newcomb made her bow to the British public at the Fortune Theatre, on December 5th, 1928.

The Repetition General, two days before, had been a success. Ellis Jeffreys and Charlie Cherry - who had dined with me that night and witnessed the performance - were loud in their praise of Mary's work; the cloud which had hung over all England because of the serious illness of King George V. had been lifted by His Majesty's gallant recovery, and everything pointed to an auspicious opening: but Mary was terribly nervous.

" I'm sure they won't like me," she said. "I'm not known in this city as I am in New York where I have lots of friends. It's sure to be a failure."

I did not share her anxiety, for I had absolute faith in her ability to carry her audience with her; but I remembered a time when Faversham had come to

Yrs sincerely Maxine Elliott -1897-

Maxine Elliott

Maxine Elliott

Boston in a new play, and his wife had come on from New York several days ahead and seen to it that the theatre was filled with his friends on the opening night. I would have liked to do the same thing, but I knew almost no one in London, save a few hunting people, whose main interests lay in the breeding of hounds and horses. I wracked my memory and suddenly remembered that my old friend, Maxine Elliott, lived somewhere in London. I picked up the telephone book; found her number; and called her house on Abbey Road. Luckily, she was at home and in a few minutes her well known voice came over the wire:-

"What are you doing in England, Alex?" she said, "hunting,I suppose." In a few words I told her of my reason for being in London, and ended by asking her if she would come to the opening night with me. "Of course I will", she answered. "I'd love to. You had better come and dine with me here. Your wife won't want to see you - I've been all through it and I know - and we'll go on to the theatre together. That will be fine."

Two evenings later, I said "Good-bye" to my wife; wished her luck; and took a taxicab to Miss Elliott's house. I was ushered into her drawing-room by a very friendly butler, who said that Miss Elliott would be down directly. A beautiful girl rose as I entered, and a voice which seemed very familiar, said:-

" I'm so glad to see you again, Mr Higginson. Aunt Max will be down in a minute. She's looking forward to going with you to-night so much."

She was do like Maxine Elliott in her younger days that I could hardly believe it was not she: but an instant's reflection brought to my mind the fact that this must Lady Johnston Forbes-Robertson's daughter - she having been Gertrude Elliott. She saw my hesitation and said:-

"You don't remember me, Mr Higginson. We met at your Mother's house in Boston three years ago, when I was in Canada with my husband." And then I remembered that she was Mrs Thomas - née, as I had guessed, Maxine Forbes-Robertson. A few minutes later, Maxine Elliott herself came into the room, looking, if not as youthful as her charming niece - still the same gracious woman I had known in America.

in the old days "when all the world was young." I had not seen Maxine for more than ten years - not since 1918 in fact - when she had been playing in "Lord and Lady Algy" with Faversham, in Boston, and we had much to tell each other during the charming little tete-a-tete dinner which followed. Of course I was so excited with the thought of what that evening might bring forth, that I must have been poor company; but Maxine, with her usual tact, led the conversation to my wife and her play, and was a very ready listener to my enthusiastic predictions of the evening's performance.

At eight o'clock, we left for the theatre and promptly at eight thirty were ushered into our seats in the third row of the stalls. In the house that night were many members of the theatrical profession, some of whom I knew by sight and some of whom Maxine pointed out to me. Just across the aisle from us was Al Woods, turned out in evening clothes for the occasion, and with him his partner, Sir Alfred Butt; while a few rows behind I recognised my old friend George Fitzwilliam, looking as cheerful and happy as ever. I suppose Mary was nervous that night - she had every reason to be - but I am very sure that she was not so nervous as I was for her. The worst nerves came [illegible] before the curtain went up. It was not unlike the sensation I have often had before riding a race - a sensation which always vanished when the flag had fallen and we were off. And so it was that night. When the curtain rose and the play had started, my nervousness ceased.

"Jealousy" is a play which deals with with jealousy on the part of a husband of an unknown, unseen rival. One hears of him from the conversations which take place between "Valerie" and her husband, "Maurice". One even listens to one end of a telephone conversation between him and "Valerie", and one watches the gradual development of the almost insane jealousy of him by the husband, who hardly knows of his existence. The first act opens on a darkened stage. One hears husband and wife, just back from their wedding supper, as they gropingly enter their apartment; then the switch is found and the stage is flooded with light. Mary looked her best that night, and the London audience broke into a cordial round of applause that must have thrilled her - as it did me - and then settled itself down to a critical consideration of this

young American actress who was appearing in London for the first time. And as the play wore on and the situations which arose were handled by Mary and Crane Wilbur with strength and decision, I could feel the house warming to it. It is a difficult task for two people to hold an audience during an entire evening, but that is exactly what those two people did that night. There was not a sound during the performance, not a cough, none of that unconscious but devastating uneasiness which is sometimes felt when things are not going quite right. The audience sat as if spell-bound, and then, at the end of the first act, after "Valerie's" dramatic telephone conversation with "Monsieur Lambertier", they burst into a roar of applause that made the blood r rush to my face and my eyes smart. Maxine turned to me.

" But she's a great actressm Alex," she said. "You never told me she was as good as this."

" I always knew it," I answered. Woods rushed over to me.

" She's great, 'Hig'," he whispered. " I told you she'd be a knockout. I'm going back to see her and tell her so," And he made for the Stage Door.

We went into the lobby to hear the comments. There were plenty and all of them were complimentary. Even the critics looked pleased. The play began a again, and as it progressed, I gradually realised that Mary's debut in London was going to be a great triumph. "Jealousy" has the quality of ever-increasing interest; its characters carry their listeners with them as it progresses. Were it not so, it would be impossible for two people to hold an audience. But the fact remains that, at the culmination of the great scene which follows"Valerie's" few moments at the piano - that scene in which she explains to her husband her constant persecution by"Lambertier" and her devotion to him - the audience burst into such applause as one seldom hears in the theatre. The third act followed close on the second; the audience w were keyed up to such a pitch of excitement that they hardly left their seats; and when the final curtain fell, the demonstration was tremendous.

I have often been told by actors that they could never experience for a second time the joy of an opening night's success; that there would always be

for them that one night when they had their first successful performance in the play for which they were responsible. I can well believe it, and yet I think that Mary Newcomb must have had two such; for I sat in the Bijou Theatre in New York one night in 1925, and joined in the applause with which the New York public welcomed her to the ranks of theatrical stars, on the first performance on "Nighthawk"; and I heard the cheers and hand-clappings which greeted her that night; and above them all, I shall always remember - and so will she - dear old Ned Potter's "Bravo". But to me the greatest night of all was the night of which I write, the night when London cheered the unknown American actress who had come to them from the New World, and called her before the curtain time after time, until she finally came forward and thanked them, and voiced the sentiment which was in so many hearts that night, in wishing for the speedy recovery of their King. I wish her father had been there. I was crying with excitement; old Al Woods was running up the aisle in his hurry to get back to Mary to tell her what he thought about it all; people I didn't know,-but who had somehow learned that I was "Mary Newcomb's" husband"- were congratulating me; and Maxine and I were trying to get back to see the newborn star.

We got there finally. Mary's dressing-room was smothered in flowers and, in their midst, was a very nervous, very worried, little American actress, who did not really think that she had made good, and would not believe Maxine and a dozen otherstheatrical celebrities who had come to congratulate her. Amongst them I noticed an old lady to whom everyone deferred, and who had a strangely familiar look, and when my wife introduced me to Dame Madge Kendall, my memory flashed back across the bridge of years to my Mother's drawing-room in Boston, when the famous actress, with her charming husband, had been her guests at luncheon. She looked at me, smiled, and said:- "Are you the little boy who came with his mother and father to see me and my husband in "The Scrap of Paper", when I played Boston so many years ago - the son of my good friend, Henry Higginson ?" I laughed.

"Yes," I said, "I'm that little boy." Later she took me aside.

"Your wife is a great actress," she said, "She ought not to waste

talents on modern plays like this. She ought to play Shakespeare; she would make a wonderful "Portia"." I have sometimes wondered if Mary thought of that remark when she played in "The Merchant of Venice", with that brilliant actor, Ernest Milton. She was a wonderful "Portia".

A few days after the first performance, Maxine gave a most delightful luncheon for Mary in her lovely house, and I had a chance to renew my acquaintance with that great English actor, Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, and his charming wife, whom I had knew many years before as Gertrude Elliott, in the days when she played, with her siter and Nat Goodwin, in "An American Citizen." So far as I know, Sir Johnston's first starring venture to America was in a dramatization of Rudyard Kipling's "The Light That Failed", in ; though he had first crossed the ocean as leading man to Mary Anderson, many years before. He came again, after he had married Miss Elliott, and they played together in Shaw's "Caesar and Cleopatra"; and finally, years later, in "Hamlet", of which he gave a performance for Harvard University, at Sanders Theatre, in Memorial Hall. To me his "Hamlet" will always remain the greatest I have ever seen.

Robbie Loraine had a luncheon for Mary, too, at the Garrick Club, and among the guests that day were Sir Gerald du Maurier and his wife, as well as a number of other interesting people. But this is not an autobiography, and it would be idle for me to tell here of Mary Newcomb's many successes on the London stage. I think one of her happiest seasons was the one in which she played in Rachel Crothers's sparkling comedy, "When Ladies Meet". The part of "Claire Woodruff" suited her perfectly, and the cast - which included Owen Nares, Ann Todd, and Cecil Ramage, and that idol of the British stage, Dame Marie Tempest, whose brilliant comedy in the part of "Bridget Drake" formed a striking contrast to the more serious charaters in the play.

The piece opened in Liverpool, and I saw it at the end of the first w week, when the little errors attendant on every first night performance had been corrected and the play had settled down to run smoothly. Afterwards, we had supper with Dame Marie - "Miss Muffet", as my wife used to call her - and her husband, Graham Browne, whom I had seen years before in "The Duke of Killikrankie"; and although I had

stood rather in awe of London's beloved star, I found her one of the most charming people I had ever met. Possessed of a ready wit, her remarks - which sometimes had a bit of a sting in them - were as brilliant and sparkling as the comedies in which she has delighted the British [illegible] public for years; and withal, she was a most charming kindly hostess - for we were her guests that night. "When Ladies Meet" toured the Provinces for several weeks before it opened in London, where it was a great success throughout the entire season.

Perhaps her portrayal of "Joan of Arc" at the Old Vic was her greatest triumph; but I think that I learned, during the years that followed that first night of "Jealousy", something of the feeling of an artist who can hold an audience in the hollow of her hand and play upon their emotions at will. Many successes there were - and some failures - but I was very glad when Mary Newcomb retired from the stage and came down to live in the country, where her home life was not interrupted by calls from managers who sought to bring her back to a public, to whom, after all, she was merely the diversion of the moment. All my life I had been a man who loved the theatre; who had watched the performers on the stage from the front row; and, not content with that, had sought to invade their private lives. And now I knew what that invasion brought and I was glad when the battle was over.

EPILOGUE

In the autumn of 1939 War was declared, and soon after, a dear friend of ours - an Officer in the A.T.S. - asked Mary to organise some entertainment for her girls and the men of the Forces. Her idea was that she should coach them in one-act plays which could be produced at the local halls. The A.T.S. proved to be too busy to rehearse, and so Mary decided to do a play with only men in the cast, and chose Eugene O'Neill's one-act drama "In The Zone" for the initial production.

Let Mary Newcomb tell the story in her own words:-

"'In The Zone' was put into rehearsal immediately, and the men worked hard and enthusiastically, giving up all of their spare time to rehearsing, often

walking the two miles from their barracks to my house. I've been through many sensations in the theatre, but never in a long life have I suffered the agonies I did on that opening night in December, 1939. Delays had been unavoidable because of periods of leave, illness, and many sudden and unpredictable calls to peel potatoes. None of them had ever spoken a line on the stage before, and because men were sleeping and eating in the hall, we were not able to have a dress or scenery rehearsal. The curtain went up and exposed them to the view of their friends and comrades - some five hundred of them - under conditions that would make many a seasoned actor tremble. Further, these friends and comrades had had only a few concerts of the lightest nature heretofore; they had not the slightest idea that the 'I.T.C.Players' - as my boys proudly called themselves - were on drama bent that night.

" It is in the book that the first head to raise itself from the seamen's bunks that line the stage in 'In The Zone' is that of the venerable 'Scottie'. For this part I had been given, by the Entertainment Officer, an enchanting Scots lad, very talented, very earnest, and very very young. In spite of the shadows, lines and high-lights which we had painted on his face; in spite of the elegant grey beard we had stuck on it; in spite of what, in rehearsal, had seemed to be a devastatingly dour look he cast around the murky cabin before he spoke, his friends recognized him instantly and greeted him cordially by name, with cheers. 'Lie down, Santa Claus' was but one of the many encouragements, generously given, which he received. In my Prompt Corner, I trembled and paled and doubted that one line would ever be spoken - much less heard. But I was wrong. Utterly sincere and unselfconscious, the boys had their audience quiet and listening in two minutes and held them so - with the help of Mr. O'Neill - for forty. It was a great triumph for them and they enjoyed it to the full. Their spokesman was loudly cheered when he announced that this was but the first of a series of plays to be given by the I.T.C.Players.

"It was fun but it was extravagant. Two months'work, the cost of building scenery, hiring costumes, buying 'props' - all this for forty minutes' entertainment! Moreover, the Entertainments Officer had to work just as hard to find turns

and acts to fill up the two hours' programme as he would have had to work to get up the whole show. The boys were enthusiastic and had proved themselves so good, however that we should have gone on, had they not been snatched away from me, one by one, and sent to other units far away.

" The answer to all these shortcomings of our original plan seemed to be a full length play, acted by more settled Officers at the Depot, who not only would have more time to rehearse intensively, but who would also be able to give performances at other Camps in the District. Major Peel-Yates - an experienced and able amateur actor - suggested the light comedy 'French Leave', by Reginald Berkeley. This we put into immediate rehearsal, with a most beautiful and talented W.A.A.F. as our leading lady.

" In a facetious moment, we called ourselves 'The Stinsford Strollers' Mobile Theatre.' We carried our own scenery, lighting equipment, and properties, and we meant to give free entertainment to as many of the smaller units and depots as we possibly could, with the time at our disposal. We opened hilariously on May 15th, 1940.

" Requests for the play poured in. We found that we could pledge ourselves to three performances a week, and had just settled down to a full schedule when the events in France, and then the Invasion Defence plans, cancelled all leave and all leisure for everyone. I went into the hospital as a V.A.D. and turned my scenery van over to the Home Guard. It had a busy summer delivering guns and boots and bombs and great-coats. My Mobile Theatre seemed to have come to a complete stop.

" But in September, 1940, I was strongly urged by the authorities to start again. In these requests the 'fun' element was noticeably absent. I was told that the need for organized entertainment was going to increase rapidly, not only because of the expansion of H.M.Forces, but because the new military situation meant that the Forces were now dispersed over a very wide area, and often in remote districts with little or no leave, and no entertainment locally available.

~~" After vainly trying to get together another amateur group,~~ I

decided to form a semi-professional company which would be able to play anywhere it was required. Although my beautiful W.A.A.F. had been sent to Scotland, I was able to find amateur women - four of them - to play the parts in 'French Leave' and to help me to stage-manage the play - Mrs Stephens, Mrs Redfern, Mrs Graham-Jones and her daughter - it is quite impossible for me to do them justice here. They gave their time, their cars, and their talents without measure. Sometimes, when I saw Mrs. Redfern, who played the leading part, crawling on her hands and knees, in her own beautiful frocks, across what was almost always a perfectly filthy back-stage, inorde order to make her proper entrance - (there was a french-window at the back which had to be avoided and ther was seldom any other way to cross the stage) - I wondered how she, who in private life might be called an extremely pampered and luxury-loving girl, could stand the conditions under which we played. But she never missed a performance and never complained. I needed six professional actors, but found only five men in London who were able or willing to join me. So, Major Peel-Yates, very unselfishly continued in his part for some weeks, until the sixth actor was found.

" I had told the Southern Command that my purpose was to go to isolated Posts and Districts, rather than to the well-equipped N.A.A.F.I. theatres which all the big Camps have. But little did I know, when the official month-in-advance list of bookings was given me, what technical and human problems would have to be met. No stage, no front curtains no dressing-rooms - these were minor difficulties. Snow, freezing wind-screens, icy roads, and continual motoring in the black-out, were more wearing. However, the first professional performance of 'French Leave' was given on November 11th, and from that date until the first week in February a minimum of five performances a week was given."

Everywhere, the play was enthusiastically received. When work in the Home Counties was completed, the Officer in charge of Entertainments of the Southern Command suggested that the company move its base, in order to be able to play to those units which were stationed in the neighbouring Counties. This entailed

far greater expense, and had it not been for the help given by some kind American friends, it would have been impossible to carry on. For all these productions cost money, and it had been Mary's idea from the start that, not only should no admission be charged to the troops, but that the project should be American-backed throughout. The funds with which to meet the cost of the orginal outlay - the capital investment so to speak - the lighting plant, the scenery, the van for transportation - had all come from America; but in addition to this, there was now the cost of billeting and paying the professional actors, transportation, the wages of the chauffeur who drove the scenery van, carpenters, electricians, etc.etc - to say nothing of the thousand and one miscellaneous expenses that always crop up. Petrol was furnished free of cost by the miltary authorities, but the wear and tear on scenery and costumes was great, and had it not been for the generous response to our appeal to friends in the United States, the undertaking must have ended with the final production of "French Leave", on February 1st.

On that night, the company played in the little village Hall near a famous estate in the West of England, where they were honoured by the presence of Queen Mary, mother of the ridgning Sovereign. It was an interesting evening, and I shall never forget the moment when the audience in the little Hall, packed with soldiers, rose as the impressive figure of the Queen entered and took her place in the seat which had been prepared for her, in the front row. She seemed to enjoy the performance greatly, and at the end, sent for my wife, and after having thanked her for the work which she was doing, asked that the various members of the company be presented to her. And so they came, one after another - Mrs Redfern, who had played the part of the English wife; Mrs Stephens, the old French landlady; John Wyse, well known for his portrayal of romantic roles in London; Warburton Gamble, who has played in many productions on both sides of the water; Raf de la Torre, who ~~is now serving~~ later served somewhere in the Middle East; Alexander Field, whose portrayal of the Cockney batman, in "Journey's End", will never be forgotten by anyone who saw the original production; and for each of them, Her Majesty had a word of praise and a kindly handclasp. She was as

gracious and simple as possible, and we all floated back to our headquarters at Stinsford House on the wings of success. But I knew that Mary Newcomb was almost in despair that night; for the money which had been subscribed was almost exhausted, and t there was much more work to be done.

We had sent out, about December 1st, a number of appeals to American friends, but the mails were irregular in those days and the funds which had come in had only been sufficient to meet the expenses of the first production; so perhaps it is not difficult to imagine the thrill it gave us to find a cablegram at Stinsford H House, from an American friend, telling us that a large sum - sufficient to meet the needs of the organization - was available. In addition to this, there were a number of letters from American friends, many of which contained generous contributions, as well as words of encouragement and support. It was decided to reform the organization, changing the name of the company from "The Stinsford Strollers" to "The Mary Newcomb Players", as requested by the Entertainment Officer of the Southern Command, and forming a Committee of well known people to administer the business and finances of the company. We were fortunate in securing several distinguished people - Her Grace The Duchess of Beaufort, The Right Honourable The Earl of Cromer, The Right Honourable The Earl of Shaftesbury, The Right Reverend The Lord Bishop of Salisbury, The Countess of Ilchester, and The Lady Digby, who kindly consented to act as Patrons and Patronesses of the project.

With finances assured, the work of casting and rehearsing the next production began; and for three weeks the little company worked as hard as ever they had on the road; for "Gaslight" - the play decided upon - would have fallen very flat had it not been produced and acted with infinite skill. There are two male characters "John Manningham" - best described as an adventurer with homicidal tendencies: and "Sergeant Rough",- a middle-aged detective; and these were entrusted to John Wyse and Warburton Gamble. The three female charcters - "Mrs Manningham"; "Elisabeth"; the cook-housekeeper ; and "Nancy", a maid - were played by Mary Newcomb, Frances Waring and Diana Cherry respectively - the latter a young woman who, although she had studied

for the stage, had never appeared on it professionally. Both the men were, of course) professionals of long experience, as was Miss Waring: while to the part of "Isabel Manningham", Mary Newcomb brought all that talent which had taken her to the top of her profession before she left the stage. There had been some doubt in her mind as to how the play would be received by the troops; for "Gaslight", by Patrick Hamilton, is not a comedy,but a very gripping thriller, whose characters must be portrayed with skill in order to produce the psychological effect upon which the play depends for its success. Once I had seen the Dress Rehearsal, I had little doubt of the outcome, - and I was right - for "Gaslight" played to packed houses and enthralled audiences for over six months, in spite of the fact that it became necessary to make repeated changes in the cast, owing to the afct that; first Wyse and then de la Torre, were called up for service. The part of "Manningham" is a difficult one, but it was well taken by de la Torre, who managed to get an extension when Wyse was forced to leave. Then he too had to go, and his place was filled by that well known actor, Hamilton Deane, whose long experience stood him in good stead. Mr Deane was an actor of the old school, who had palyed amny parts in America, as well as England, and who, in his leisure hours, was a most delightful companion. He had acted with, or knew, many of my old friends in The Lambs, and we used to sit together in the evenings, after his work was done, talking over the old days and the old plays, which were New York successes when both of us were young. But Mr Deane found the work more than he could stand when the company went on the road, and his place was ultimately filled by Allen Trotter, who carried on until the play closed.

The choice of the next play to be produced was considered at a meeting of the Committee held during the autumn, and after some discussion, it was decided to produce "Jealousy", that play of which I have already told in detail. It was universally felt that if a good man could be found to play the part of "Maurice", it would be hard to find a better play for the purpose; and the low cost of production and the facility of its transportation were deciding factors. Mary Newcomb journeyed to London in search of a leading man, and was finally lucky enough to find a young actor who

was not only physically fitted to play the part, but who was most interested in doing so. There was one drawback - he aws in the service and had been with his unit for some time. At first it seemed quite impossible that he would be released, even temporarily, but luckily the General in Command of the Division to which his unit belonged was a man who believed in the importance of entertainment for the Forces; and when the situation was explained to him, he at once gave orders that the man in question be "lent" to "The Mary Newcomb Players" for the run of the play. Within a week, the impossible was accomplished, and Dennis Rose-Price and his wife - who goes by the stage name of Jean Schofield - were installed at "Stinsford House" and the play was put into rehearsal at once.

Everything went smoothly; the finishing touches were given by Franklin Dyall, who was kind enough to lend his services as producer, and the little audience that was present at the Dress Rehearsal, saw, I think,the best production of the play that has ever been given. Ten years of experience had brought maturity to Mary Newcomb's portrayal of "Valerie", while Mr Price's "Maurice" was, to me, one of the most convincing performances of the part that I have yet seen - sincere and virile, inspite of the high-strung, almost insane vein of jealousy which runs through it. The play ~~has been~~ was given throughout the Southern Command; in Dorset and Devon and far off Cornwall; in Hampshire and Berkshire and as far East as Oxfordshire. Her Majesty Queen Mary has seen it and is now a contributor to the funds which support the project. For the entrance of the United States into the War, of course stopped the contributions from America and necessitated an appeal for help to the dwellers in England. To them who, by this time, had become so used to the sound of Hitler's planes, often punctuated by the crash of bombs, the conditions under which this devoted little company played, were nothing new; but to those Americans who may read this account of the founding and development of The Mary Newcomb Players, it may bring a thrill to learn that often the plays were given in Camps which were subject to air raids at short notice, and that more than once, owing to the "black-out" , the journeys to and from the places of performance were made in total darkness. More than once,too

the players have seen the flashes from the anti-aircraft shells and the rattle of machine-gun fire from the planes overhead. One might fairly say that they were often in the combat zone; but the gratitude of the men and their Officers knew no bounds, and I have read letters written to Mary Newcomb by the Commanding Officers of the Camps at which she has played that mean more to her than the fulsome praise of a first night critic.

The work was hard and dangerous; the hours were long; but perhaps the following extract from a letter which I received during the Spring of 1942, explains the reason why this final phase of her theatrical career has meant so much to Mary Newcomb;-

> " It is very late - one-fifteen A.M. in fact. We had a crowded and enthusiastic gathering to-night. Hampshire will always be to me a land of gifts and flowers. I don't know why, but every performance has been planned for some expression like that. My room has literally been a bower of flowers all the way."